

India's National Gay & Lesbian Magazine

February 2010
Issue 3

PiNK

—pages

GAY IN THE CITY

*The best of gay lifestyle in
India's top metros*

GLOBE TROTTERS

Gay days in London & Paris

BEST LOOKS THIS SPRING

SUNIL GUPTA'S PHOTOGRAPHY

*Photographer, Artist, Writer, Activist and the
queer Dilliwalla*



Pink Pages

Issue 3 February 2010



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EDITORS DESK



Shunned by a heteronormative society, and persecuted for who they are, gay people have for centuries created their own safe spaces on the fringes of the mainstream. Things changed with the American gay liberation movement and the effects of the counter-culture that brought gay culture out of the closet. As India too slowly graduates from the ghosts of Section 377 into a more hopeful future, it is these very gay spaces in our cities that are getting increasingly out and about.

At this year's gay Christmas bash at a bar in Bangalore, I met a retired American couple from Boston, who danced to the tunes of both Ma daa Ladlaa and Tub Thumping and swore that Bangalore is no less colorful than Boston when it comes to the party scene. Increasingly, gay night outs and parties are being organized in "regular" bars, and not obscure suburban ones or private farmhouses. Film and art festivals like Nigah are not just expressions of who we are, but indeed help in community building. Just the simple act of holding hands with your partner in a public space is a liberation that these spaces offer to our community.

And so as we move into 2010 with spirited hearts, Pink Pages takes a look at these gay and lesbian spaces in our metro cities and how they've helped shape our lives. And as more young gay people migrate from their hometowns to bigger cities they widen the color and vigor of our cultural horizons. Away from the scrutiny of judging family members and protected by liberal anti-discrimination policies of the multinational companies they work for (and straight friends, who at worse, just don't care) it's significantly easier for them to be a part of this growing gay cultural scene.

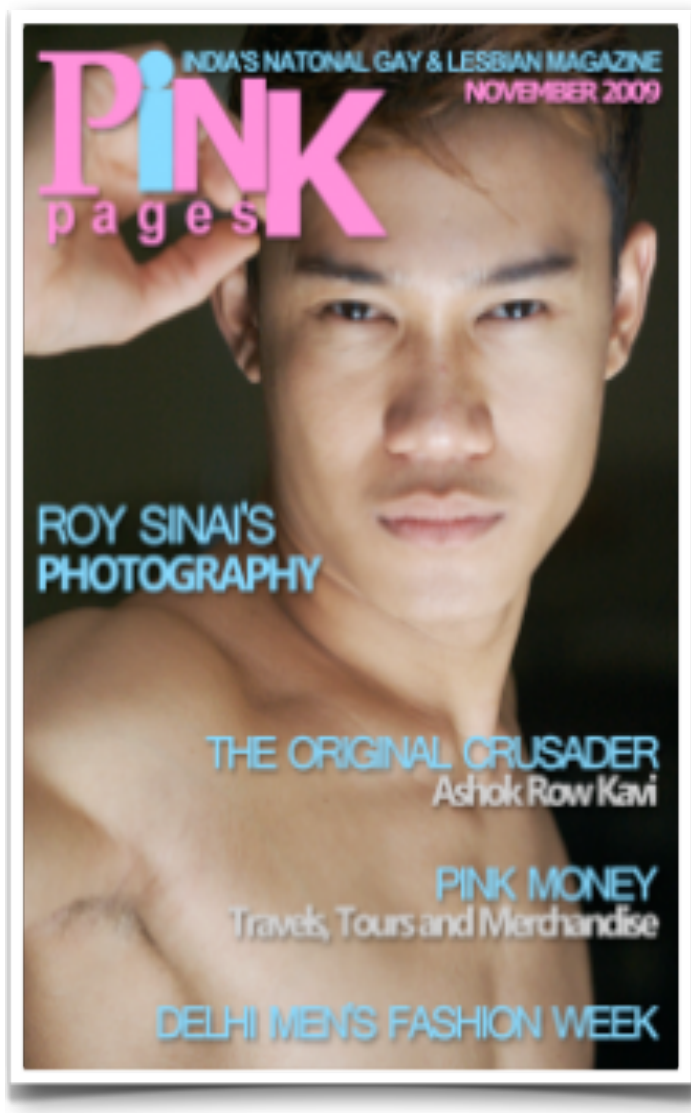
At the end of the day, mainstreaming is a far more effective tool for furthering the cause of gay rights than any slogan or litigation can ever be. And while our cultural spaces need to integrate further with the mainstream, the fact that they can now exist in an environment free of open harassment or discrimination is a step in the right direction.

Plus for you globe trotters, our travel section goes international in this issue. As more and more out gay travelers pack their bags and move around, our travel writers will get you the best of pink life and lifestyle in these places. We start off with the two perennial favorites- London and Paris, cities known for their exotic gay scenes. And when you're gay and Indian, let Pink Pages be your guide!

Udayan

(Editor in Chief)

EDITOR'S INBOX



Homophobia of the middle classes

It's not the uneducated who are against the scrapping of 377. It's our urban middle class who loathe talking about homosexuality openly. Some feel it is weird while others think it's a western concept. I have heard innumerable stories where parents had taken their kids to see a psychiatrist when they came out of their closet. I was watching an English news channel a few days back and there was this poll that asked how many wanted gay marriage to be legalized. The percentage was less than 20. Who watches these English news channels? Well that's your urban India. Even in the 21st century, in Kolkata my hometown, supposedly a centre of culture, religious leaders meet constantly to denounce the judgment and have the impertinence of saying that people of the gay community should be burned. I wonder why these fundamentalists and fascists, who have done nothing for this country can voice their opinions, and women,

gay people and the backward classes, are still fearful to speak out.

Amrita Sengupta

Being gay in Pakistan

A very nice article, but something I wanted to mention regarding re-interpretation of the Quran. Quran, like any other book, you can open, read and interpret to the best of your knowledge and experience. There is no such thing as a right interpretation or a wrong one. Everyone has his own capacity to understand and take away the message. Just like a piece of art, a novel or a poem.

Ulema describe or interpret it to the best of their understanding, I can do it to my knowledge, you can also do it to the best of your knowledge. Does not mean one is right or the other is wrong. Same with the story of Lot, some people put a negative charge on it, some do not. And it's ok both ways. As one can never claim that their thinking or views is the correct one.

The problem arises only when one tries to force their views on others. Whether, you, I, my neighbor or a mullah sitting in a corner mosque.

Oli

Maine gay marriage ban

Democracy has to learn how to balance majority's wishes as well as protect some basic rights of all minorities. America is an interesting case study

Rishi

Books and Literature

The author of 'A Married Woman' indeed has depicted the lesbian scenario in Indian society in the most matter-of fact way. That same sex love struggles to cope up with the various social,cultural, political issues, only to be left unfulfilled at the end is extremely realistic.

Maitreyee

Good review (The Line of Beauty- Alan Hollinghurst), I enjoyed this review as much as I had enjoyed the novel.. Brilliant novel must say, in both ways as in the emotional content as well as the literary style, one of the best I have ever read.

Manas Gautam

I 'was' Bi, I 'am' gay

Pathetic bi-phobic article. Don't know how it got to make it to Pink Pages.

Tanmay Singhal

Polls and Polls

Emotions very aptly put across. Superbly written. And yes, all these other things will come, but one by one. Hold your horses for now. Let them loose when the time is right. And for

people who think differently or have difficulty accepting the LGBT community, let them be. I am sure they will come around.

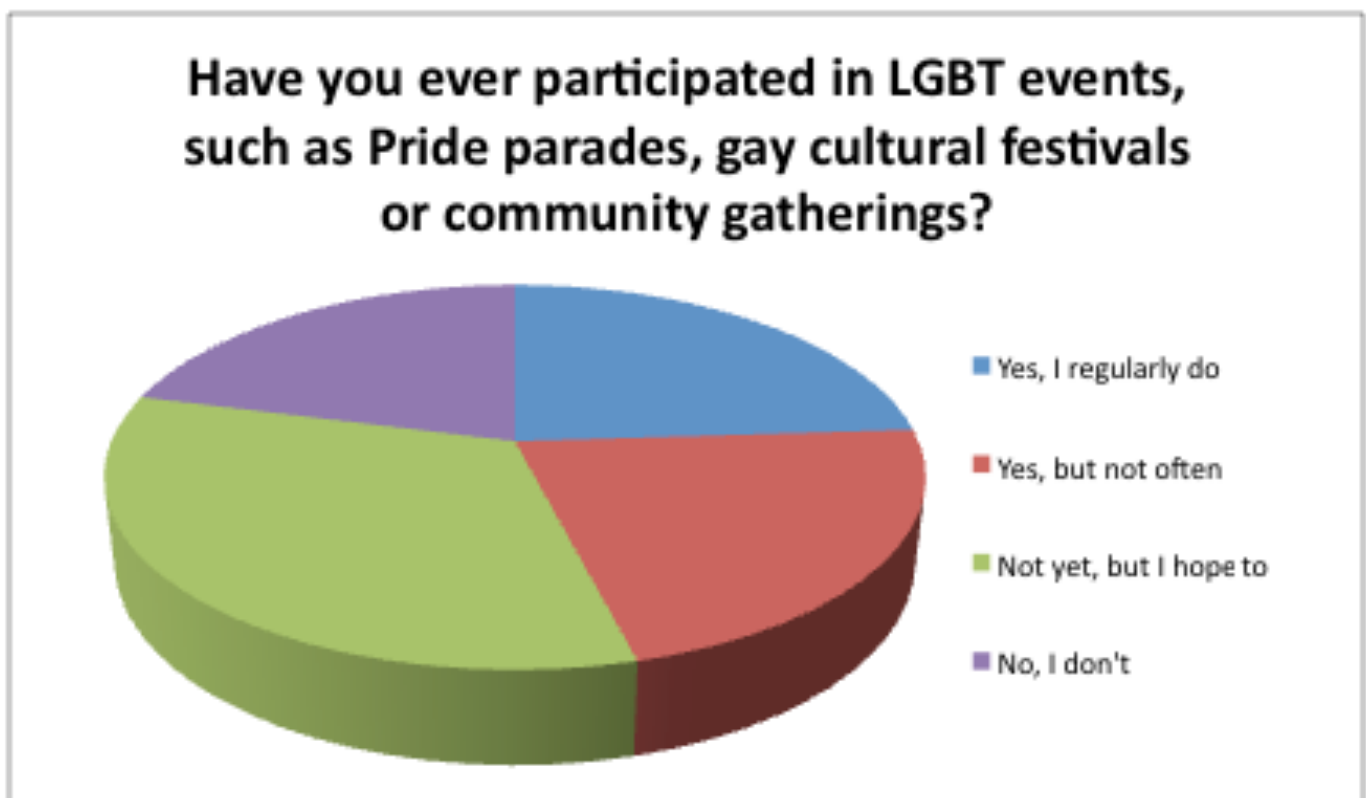
Shrushti

Congratulations

Many congratulations on this magazine. I and even my straight pals have found it immensely riveting. I wish your team all the best! Looking forward to many more issues!

Rohit Chavan

ONLINE POLL



FAGGY FIGURE:

10,500 : The number of US servicemen fired between 1997 and 2008 by the Defense Department for being openly gay and thus violating the military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy.

GAY IN THE CITY

Cover Story

Tushar M. (With inputs from Ananya Dhote in Delhi, Aditya in Kolkata, Shiva Prasad in Hyderabad, Ravi in Chennai and Kishore Kumar in Pune)



Being a frequent traveler is a nuisance and a boon in itself.

Being a frequent traveler is a nuisance and a boon in itself. The long hours in the trains and buses (Student budget guys! Air travel is way too expensive!) are enough to drain you as it is, but when you end up in a strange city with nowhere to chill and relax, or find a nice cruising place, you end up cursing yourself at the end of a trip as to “Why oh Why was this trip uneventful?” (ahem! I do that a lot!)

So saving all of you frequent travelers a lot of mental aggravation when it comes to having a good time in a strange city, Pink Pages brings to you a blow by blow (pun unintended) account of the LGBT scene across India’s major metropolitan cities.



DELHI

One doesn't have to be an out and proud die hard activist to be a part of the Delhi LGBT culture. The queer social circle is drawn around a personalized group of friends that catch up every now and then, or there are queer events like parties (notably, parties for gay men hosted by Boyzone), art exhibitions/film screenings that either center around Nigah or are notified by a plethora of online social networking groups like Queer Delhi (on Facebook).

These events help to provide socializing space for a community whose denizens feel isolated not only from the conventional milieu but also amongst themselves. On the whole, this results in having a positive impact on their coming out. But, these events also respect the extent to which a person might be closeted. 80% of the people that are a part of the active gay culture are not completely out. At such events or informal gatherings, one is not allowed to take pics etc.

Gay culture is moving away from the shady parks/alleys to posh nightclubs. Boyzone hosts weekly Saturday night events at the POLKA club or at Pegs N Pints. They have been hosting special Halloween, Christmas and New Year bashes too. More information available at PR (erstwhile g4m).

Putting orientation aside, for women the going is not as easy as gay men. So, while the gay parties and events are quite publicized, the social scene for lesbians may be active, but restricted. Online lesbian and bi women groups like Pink Delhi form a network of friends that know each other personally; they organize get-togethers that

can be informal meetings, clubbing or in house parties. Personal information of members is, as always, kept confidential.

One of the most famous names in Delhi is Nigah, a non-funded queer collective that works on issues of gender and sexuality. Based in Delhi since 2003, they organize events each month and entry to all the events is free. Events range from art shows, performances, to the widely publicized Nigah Queer Fest, where a plethora of films, interactive workshops, and arts and literary events are held.

www.nigahdelhi.blogspot.com

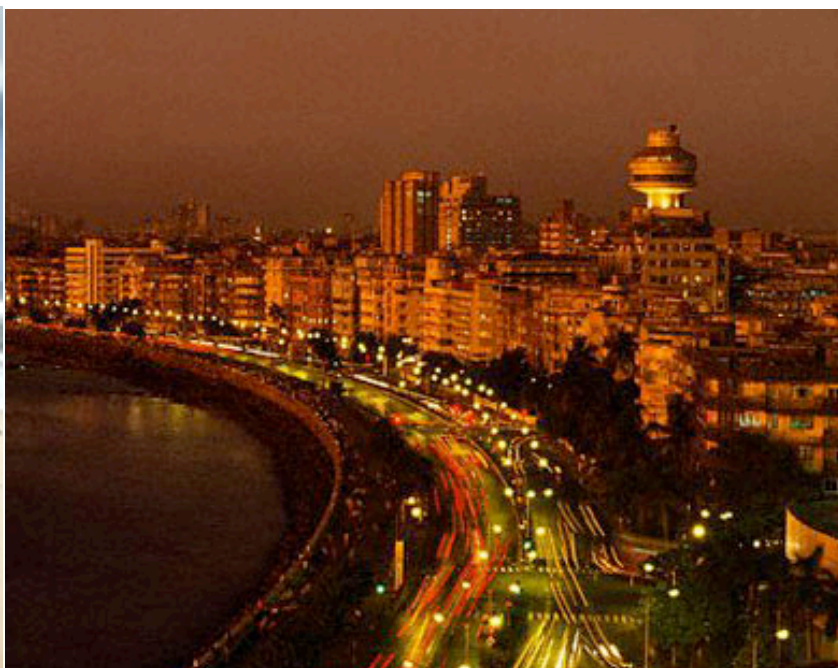
MUMBAI

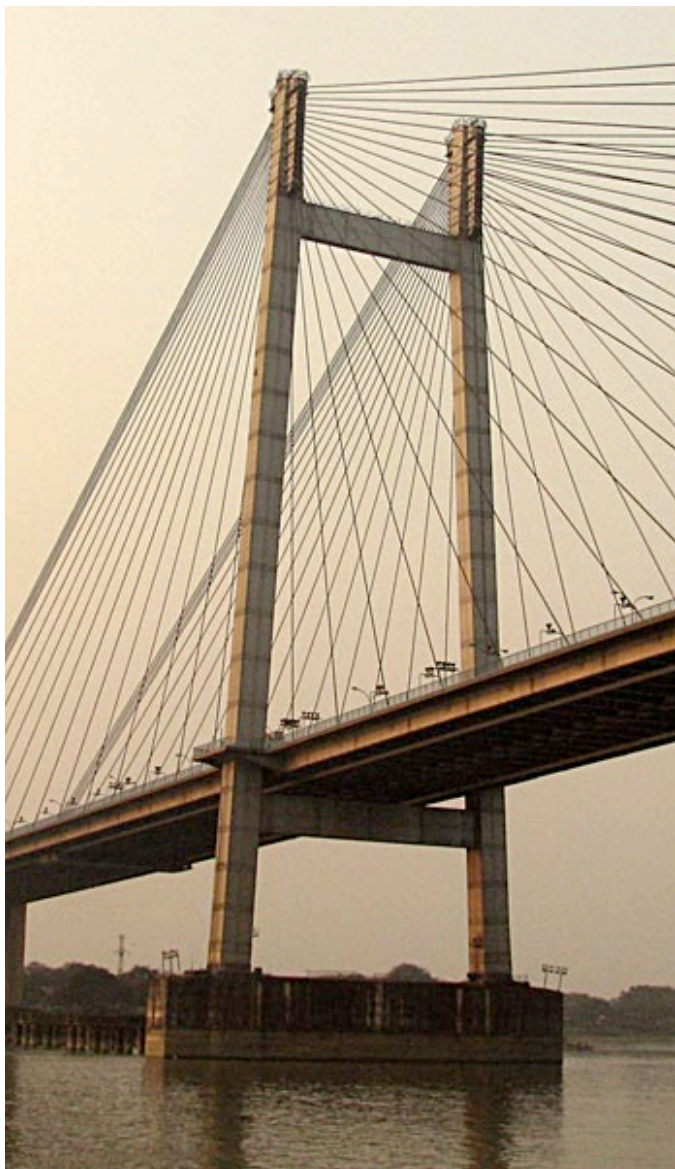
One word. Freaked out!

Mumbai nightlife, even the straight type, has been said to be one of India's most happening. So why not the gay life?



- Nigahdelhi.blogspot.com
- Azaadbazaar.com
- Gaybombay.org
- Humsafar.org





“For some time, I doubted them but my doubts vanished as I realized the real reason for their excitement. Cheap passes, stag entry allowed and unlimited drinks with freedom of hips & legs moving was all they were excited for. ‘Park Street’, a famous area for youth night life, was our destination.”



Mumbai has just the most exciting venues and parties, apart from a very prominent activism scene, and of course the ever alluring queer-themed festivals which feature the most prominent of the queer literati, and the glitterati.

(we covered them in our last issue too; their stuff is pretty great!).

azaadbazaar.com, gaybombay.org, humsafar.org

Gay Bombay constantly keeps organizing monthly film screenings, parent-counsellor meets, and of course the (almost) weekly parties held at various happening places across Mumbai (mostly town side). Don't be amazed if you find your favorite TV stars boogying there; the party circuit sees a good participation of well known faces (only sometimes though). Apart from the GB parties, Salvation Star and God Save the Queer are other noteworthy party planners. For those who prefer a more mixed crowd (homo and hetero), venues like Zenzi and Firangi Paani are very gay friendly. Most parties have a majority of gay participation, but the lesbian crowd has been seen frequenting these more often off late, in very small numbers though. (More on the lesbian scene in Mumbai in Priya Ganoo's 'Mumbai's L Factor' in the Metro Life section of the magazine.)

The Humsafar Trust comes out with Bombay Dost, the oldest LGBT magazine in India, though it caters to Mumbai and nearby areas. For those who'd like to shop for some pride articles and stuff, check out Azaad Bazaar's outlet in Bandra

KOLKATA

Kolkata is a simple city full of all simple people and life. Full of grace and audacity this city gives the casual visitor such an exciting experience that one can never forget in their life. One wouldn't know much about Kolkata's night life. Might even have a few strong opinions that unlike Mumbai, Kolkata becomes dead in the night time. No discos, partying out etc. in all a dully dull life. Says Aditya, who stayed in the city for a couple of months, “Even though I had heard a lot about Kolkata's gay life, but since I explored the city with a whole bunch of my straight friends, I never had an experience of that picturesque also. This glass of my belief was broken by two straight friends of mine, who were damn excited telling us all their story of a visit to a pub and where they enjoyed themselves a lot. But the biggest shock I had when they made it clear that it was a gay pub.”

“For some time, I doubted them but my doubts vanished as I realized the real reason for their excitement. Cheap passes, stag entry allowed and unlimited drinks with freedom of hips & legs moving was all they were excited for. ‘Park Street’, a famous area for youth night life, was our destination.”

Apart from the party scene, it is well known that Kolkata was the first Indian city to hold a pride parade in 1999 when just 15 people turned up. Today it’s become an important event in the city’s calendar. Sappho for Equality, an organization for lesbian/bisexual women, has been organizing paper conferences on queer issues since 2008. There are also plenty of film festivals being organized by various organizations.

CHENNAI

It is correct to say that the gay scene has just taken off in Chennai. Private parties and discreet meetings were commonplace even before the amendment of IPC-377. However, in a place where discs shut down earlier than most major metros, it is only now that the party scene is, at max, just started gaining momentum.

Chennai Dost is a major organization here which keeps on organizing parties, film screenings, meetings, and of course the Pride Parade, which happened in Chennai for the first time last year. Regular visitors and localites would know that Marina Beach (near Kannagi Statue) is a major gay-cruising spot, apart from Besant Nagar Beach and TVK Park, Anna



Unlike other metros, the amount of literary events and openly queer film festivals are next to nil in this southern city, primarily because of the still dominant ‘we don’t talk about sex, leave alone gay sex’ policy among a sizable majority of the city’s denizens.

Nagar. Chennai Dost has a pub dedicated for gays and bisexuals on Wednesdays called Diesel in T Nagar, and another location in Nungambakkam.

Unlike other metros, the amount of literary events and openly queer film festivals are next to nil in this southern city, primarily because of the still dominant ‘we don’t talk about sex, leave alone gay sex’ policy among a sizeable majority of the city’s denizens.

chennai-dost.blogspot.com

BENGALURU

If I were to personally pick a city that could be called the ‘potential gay capital of India’, I would undoubtedly choose Bengaluru. Even with IPC 377 passing and the plethora of events being held in Delhi, Bengaluru as a city can be said to have a more gay-friendly (I’m not talking about gay-tolerant, but gay-friendly) culture.

The Bengaluru gay scene is varied; from queer film festivals to literary events, to evening tea with your whole gang, or a Joggers club for those who like the morning air, Bengaluru has something to appeal to everyone.

We start with the Saturday night party organized by Pink Nation or Party

Square (the two most famous party organizers; my friends and I always have a dilemma as to which one to go for!) at one of the many awesome locations, including Seven Hotel.

For those who’re still not hungover, Gay Runners and Breakfast at Cubbon Park at 8:30 am on Sunday is the best bet. Moving on to the hangout zones, MG-Brigade can literally be called as Liberty Avenue, especially on Sunday evening when the whole queer crowd comes over and relaxes over coffee at the Barista at Barton Centre (MG Road; this place has a reputation of having atleast 50% queer crowd at any given point of time.

Even the gollappa wala can tell you the names of the more famous ones in the queer circle!). Honestly, one is bound to run into atleast a dozen acquaintances, which includes ex-boyfriends, hags, half of my ignore list, crushes with their latest arm candies (<heartbreak>), etc.

Film festivals keep happening time to time; one of them is scheduled in April. Bengaluru also had their first gay pride last year, and overall the city is surprisingly very gay friendly, in addition to the extensive family-like bonding between its queer inhabitants.



MG-Brigade Bengaluru can literally be called as Liberty Avenue, especially on Sunday evening when the whole queer crowd comes over and relaxes over coffee at the Barista at Barton Centre.

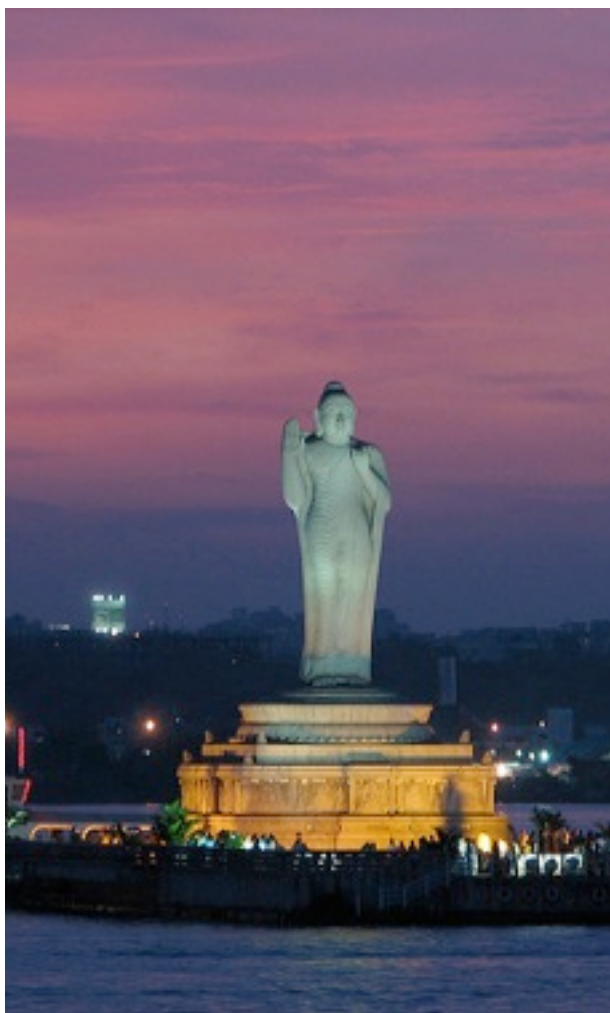
PUNE

Pune has a happening queer scene, though it may not be as bustling as Mumbai or Bangalore. Beginning with a bed-and-breakfast at Keith's you can be assured of a comfortable stay in Pune, if you know where to go.

Regular events and social gatherings are conducted by a social support group called "Birds of a Feather" (BOAF), run by Apphia K. These activities include parties and fun events held at happening venues. These parties happen once a month on average, and the next one is scheduled in early February. Entry is strictly based on prior reservation, which can be done by adding yourself on the group's Facebook page. A group page also exists on PlanetRomeo. A guest list is prepared, and you usually need to be a part of the list to get in. You can take your straight friends along, but other straight people are kept out. This meticulous process is designed to, as Apphia says, keep out the homophobes. An entry fee is often collected to cater to the needs of arranging for a venue, and other administrative requirements.

Pune Mirror and TimeOut are journals that are queer friendly and bring out articles on queer-related issues. A quarterly journal called "Jiah" is brought out from different cities in the country, centred in Pune. It deals with lesbian-related issues.

Other businesses in Pune that are queer friendly include Either-Or, which recently opened a Pune outlet of AzaadBazaar. High Spirits, Zavoo's and Opus are restaurants that are queer friendly, where you can simply be with your friends in a comfortable atmosphere.



HYDERABAD

Hyderabad, a staid and unexciting city a decade ago, started its metamorphosis at the beginning of this century, grew by leaps and bounds into a mega metropolis. Now the 5th largest city in India, with its distinct navabhi character, it has a small but visible gay population. The scene definitely exists and is getting better. Standing by its cosmopolitan appeal it has embraced the concept of alternate lifestyle quite well. We may not have paraded with all the pomp and allure like the other metro cities of India but we have been voted as the most gay-friendly city in the country. Hyderabad city is very friendly and tolerant towards gay guys. You can be out to your friends and yet see the immense support you receive. The support groups are doing their best too. Here the gay movement is more individual led than by an organisation or activists. Guys now have such clarity that they are coming out in college and know what they want from queer life. It would take a few more decades for gay life to come into the mainstream though. Attitudes toward gay men and lesbians vary here just as they do anywhere else. On average, however, you'll find fewer Hyderabadis who think it's any of their business whether you're gay or straight. There are a few regular gay cruising places for the like the minded people to meet up. There are three pubs which cater to this community on dedicated days and the private parties are always there. There is a hesitation to put information online for the fear of attracting attention from the homophobic authorities

METRO LIFE

Mumbai's L Factor

Priya Ganoo

Mumbai is not only one of the safest metros in the country but also a liberal and accepting city. Having said that it's also the city where people of all class, gender, sexuality come to work, play and make merry. Gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, lesbian- the city loves them all.

Post the Delhi High Court judgment there has been an increase in social gatherings, parties and events predominantly organized for Lesbians in the city. 'The L Lounge' organizes parties for lesbian women every month and is quite a hit with the dykes here. Shobhna Kumar, one of the organizing members, says, "Our main aim is to have a safe fun space for women in the city. Going forward, we are looking to organize events. However, safe, non-expensive venues in the city are hard to find. But we are constantly on the look out for such places.". So expect more events from 'The L Lounge' team in

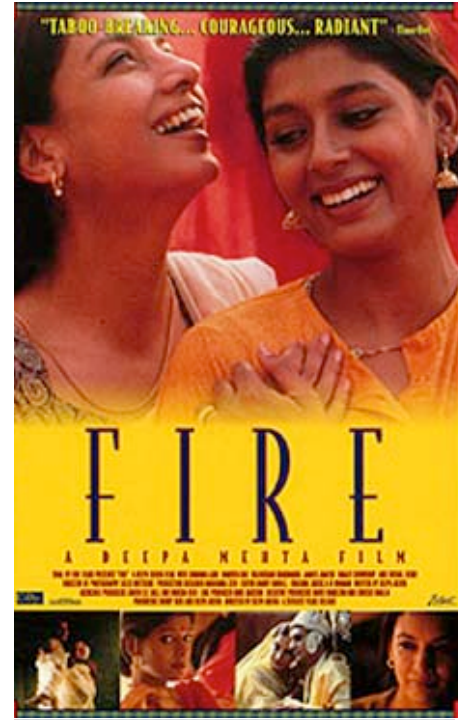
t h e
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have been organizing parties, social do's for some time now cater mainly to gay men. On 24th January Bombay Dost organized a 'Lesbian Short Film Festival' which saw a bigger turn out than usual. "We try to cater to all segments of the LGBT community. But with 'The L Lounge' parties being a regular happening we thought the films could get the right kind of publicity. We aim to showcase at least one Lesbian movie a month in times to come." says Vikram Phukan, an organizer and Editor of Bombay Dost.



Bollywood, Homosexuality and Pakistan

Nuwas Manto



The Indian LGBT community, activists and Bollywood must know that what they do effects the Pakistani society's perceptions of homosexuality as well as other countries where Bollywood-culture is loved.

Don't get me wrong. I love Pakistan. But I also love honesty. And so I have to concede the fact, whether I like it or not, that the Pakistani film industry is literally dead. In fact Pakistani films have become a butt of jokes even among Pakistanis themselves because of their outlandish depictions.

So we have huge influence of the Indian film industry in my homeland. I mean a very heavy influence and following. Before we learn the names of our family members, we learn the names of Salman Khan, Akshay Kumar and Shahrukh Khan among others.

But how does it all really fit in here? Because now that India has got a kick-start towards a hopefully enlightened and bright LGBT future, what kind of gay-related films are made in India will

also influence us, the Pakistani society. The Delhi High Court's decision got us all thinking about gay people, who were known to be existent but not acknowledged or not really thought about. Behind the scenes of a famous morning television talk-show I came to know about the host wanting to know the opinion of an elderly guest about the High Court's decision. But alas! The man was a homophobe and refused to opine.

Dostana, the film, too got our countrymen worried, and at least for once gay people were discussed in media forums, though not really in a very positive light (with the exception of Dr. Shaheen Hayi, a psychiatrist who openly stated, on Hum television's morning talk-show about the hormonal effects of pregnancy on the child's sexuality). I remember a worried good-Muslim-caller, calling into the Nadia Khan show, and trying to get through her opinion as to how could such vulgar films, such as Dostana, be made.

Personally, I don't think there is anything wrong with depicting effeminate men on screen. But when you show only that side of our world-wide community, you

are stereotyping us. And that is exactly what Bollywood films have been doing, which of course has been having its effect on Pakistani society too.

I remember discussing the Delhi High Court decision with a body guard of my neighborhood, and he was like 'Yeah! So it should be like that', which honestly struck me. But the discussion started from the pro-gay decision of the court. I do know it's not happening any time soon but when a Bollywood star comes out, it is going to press people to accept that we do exist, something for which Karachi Gay parade came out, albeit only for once.

But even before Dostana, Fire and Girlfriend had got us all talking, albeit in a homophobic tone. So now I believe the pro-gay as well as gay producers and directors themselves need to focus on gay-themed movies that challenge long held stereotypical notions. In this respect, Indian society could be a great help to the Muslim Queer community if it also keeps in mind the problems of the Muslim gay world, as India's largest religious minority group is that of Muslims, and as part of a secular

the idiotic and inane arguments of the Mullahs. It will be risky and it is going to be an arduous task too, with serious consequences. Sorry, but I am not going to lie about this being an all hunky-dory business. However, neglecting the Muslim Queer community in a place where Muslims form the largest minority group isn't going to work for any LGBT person in India or even other places. To eradicate homophobia, you have to challenge

every homophobe, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian or any other. That is also the business of Bollywood, possibly the strongest Indian medium that could spread the message of tolerance towards gay people. So my question is: Will any Madhur Bhandarkar or the likes of him take over the responsibility of challenging those religious moral police card holders using the medium of films, knowing that it might back-fire on their personal life?

The Indian LGBT community, activists and Bollywood must know that what they do affects the Pakistani society's perceptions of homosexuality as well as other countries where Bollywood-culture is loved, which only puts a double responsibility on those in the industry to stop inserting that 'gay joke' showing us as caricatures for comical relief in pathetic films which have no chance of hitting the block-buster title.

It doesn't matter what you do in the bedroom as long as you don't do it in the street and frighten the horses. ~Daphne Fielding, The Duchess of Jermyn Street

Homosexuality is god's way of insuring that the truly gifted aren't burdened with children. ~Sam Austin

Isn't it a violation of the Georgia sodomy law for the Supreme Court to have its head up its ass? ~Letter to Playboy magazine, February 1987

Who would give a law to lovers? Love is unto itself a higher law. ~Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, A.D. 524

If homosexuality is a disease, let's all call in queer to work: "Hello. Can't work today, still queer." ~Robin Tyler

You know what they say: You can't teach a gay dog straight tricks. ~Trey Parker & Matt Stone, South Park

THE GAY AGENDA

AHAM, THE ME:
PINK TWEETS
Harish Iyer

MY HOMOSEXUAL
AGENDA
Udayan

SELECTIVE
COUNSEL
GURLEEN
KHANDPUR

Aham, The Me: Pink Tweets

HARISH IYER

I am perpetually online at all times. My phone, a modest Nokia N72, helps me connect with the world of friends through the World Wide Web. I talk and Gtalk, I tweet and I sms, I MMS and Twitpic, I email and I Gmail, I Google and I ogle - all from my N72. It is like a lifeline to me. A window that opens vistas of opportunities to me..opportunities of all kinds-a myriad of diverse ones from how to bake, and how to mate, to finding a date... it serves all purposes. It keeps me on the groove when I am on the move.

"AHA! hw I wsh this hot cutlet was gay! Gimme "that" look baby" I wrote once on the famous networking site 'Twitter' when a hot guy got into the Mumbai local train that I was commuting from home to work. And jhatpat came the reply tweets. My

friend said "WOW! Looks like u r having a gud time". Another jokingly tweeted the lines from the film Dostana-"Phool Phalo.. Khair chhodo". My message travelled all through the cyberspace...it travelled through the length and breadth of our country. And to Germany, London, USA, Pakistan... everyone who followed me on twitter knew what I was up to. It was like a nail biting moment in a cricket match where there is one ball left and 2 runs to be taken to win the match.The world was praying... as I was 'prey'ing. People followed my tweets and gave me several innovative suggestions, most of which were inspired by Hindi flicks. My friend from Australia said "keep looking at him...he will get the hint". And Indian tweets were all filled with motherly emotions, predictions and perseverance. "I really wish he is gay... I want to see yousettled...go for the

kill buddy", "I am sure he will heed to your glances, my intuitions are strong". While I was busy reading and replying to the tweets in excitement, I missed the Hot Guy, and before I could realize I saw him alighting at a station... my drooling eyes settled and my mind was unsettled. I tweeted now in pain and vain-"He is gone... poi pochee." And now, a new wave of sympathy and empathy blew in twitter land. I received condolences which seemed like obituary messages. Such is the magic of twitter, a movement of sorts that is gaining popularity by the day. It is amazing to note that there are so many who get hooked and booked on twitter. But is it all fun and pun and no serious talk? that there are so many who get hooked and booked on twitter. But is it all fun and pun and no serious talk? No. It is not so. While I do tweet about my

When the section 377 case was up for hearing at the High Court, twitterizans echoed and supported the cause in large numbers; many joined the Queer Pride Parade in Bombay. We have had and still have and will have constructive and interesting debates and discussions on Twitter.



daily bitter sweet incidences-as-they-happen, I also use the media to voice my opinions on serious issues. When the section 377 case was up for hearing at the High Court... Twitterizans echoed and supported the cause in large numbers; many joined the Queer Pride Parade in Bombay. We have had and still have and will have constructive and interesting debates and

discussions on twitter. And they are made interesting because of the space restrictions - you just have 140 characters to express your view. So twitterizans innovate and explore new lingo and methods to woo and boo. The question I guess one would also ask is if this place is serenely sanctified for homosexuals and lesbians and a place where mentally challenge.

But it doesn't happen quite in a quotidian. Most of these homophobic messages that I have got are often as private tweets (aka direct messages) which are not visible to all and sundry. It is difficult for petty minds to sustain their

saneness when they see someone blatantly and brazenly be comfortable about his or her sexuality. They would pounce on any opportunity of this kind to vent their wrath. And not that they hold themselves back here. But twitter is so

open as a medium, which is visible to the whole world, one wouldn't actually want to make him/herself been seen as a propagator of any negative or repressive thought. I should agree though, that if homophobic thought

finds resonance and depth in the minds of fellow twitterers the tables could turn too.

Until then

Tweetthe Rahooooo!



Udayan Unbarred: My homosexual agenda

UDAYAN

Over the past three years of blogging and writing that I've been doing, I've had my fair share of critics. And since it's not possible for me to reply to each individual critical mail that I get, I think for the benefit of all I'd rather make my point here on a more open forum.

I categorize my critics into two broad groups- I call them the 'gay militants' and the 'straight's allies'. Please do not read too much into the words 'militant' or 'ally'. These are just for nomenclature's sake. Let me begin by talking about the

'gay militants' first. These are the people who've been asking me why I spend so much effort in trying to convince straight people to support gay rights. The answer to this lies in the fact why I became a gay rights activist in the first place. There was a time when I used to feel utterly distressed by my gender non-conformity, my lack of attraction towards girls. It was only much later that I discovered, that my source of distress could actually be turned into a source of immense love and happiness. The point is, we live in a society that is highly hetero-centrist, to the point that it makes growing up a stifling experience for young LGBT people who may not have yet discovered

the joys that an openly gay life can bring. They live in families that do not talk about this issue, and go to schools, where homophobic bullies can make life difficult for anyone who's out. Therefore, while it may not be of any direct consequence to me that society becomes more accepting of gays, because I already lead my life as an openly gay person, we need to put a support structure in place for the ones, especially the teenage lot, which is still struggling with their sexual orientation. So what their parents and teachers think of homosexuality has a direct bearing on their lives. Plus, as we've seen in the United States, what these parents and teachers think also has an effect on how

Is there a single day when a straight person might be apprehensive of revealing the fact that they're into a relationship with a person of the opposite sex? Can gay people be so confidently out without even the slightest fear of a negative outcome? Until that day comes, gay pride parades are going to remain as relevant as ever.

they place for the ones, especially the teenage lot, which is still struggling with their sexual orientation. So what their parents and teachers think of homosexuality has a direct bearing on their lives. Plus, as we've seen in the United States, what these parents and teachers think also has an effect on how they vote. Now that Section 377 is gone, for the Government to make more gay-friendly decisions, we need the support of our straight friends all the more.

Now coming to the group that I've always considered more lethal than the other lot- the 'straight's allies' or rather the 'homophobe's allies' (As much as I'm sometimes tempted to, I can't really believe in Queer As Folk's Brian Kinney when he says, "There are two kinds of straight people- those who hate you on your face, and those who hate you behind your back") Theirs is the classical question- Why gay pride? And the argument is simple- straight people don't have a straight pride day. Then why do we need a gay pride day? Indeed what's there to be proud of in being gay?

To answer that, we first need to get our understanding of the word 'pride' clear. There are two types of pride- there's one that comes with achievement (Remember the euphoria you felt when you won that debate

competition in high school?) But that's not it. Pride is also the anti-thesis of shame. When an individual, or worse, a whole community is relegated to the abyss of shame and self-loathing for years (centuries in our case), and finally when they gather the courage to come out in the open with a new sense of self-belief, what really drives that grit is nothing else, but the spirit of pride. Thus gay pride parades or rainbow parades are a show of pride in individual identity, as opposed to humiliation and subjugation, and at the same time a celebration of sexual diversity (Even our straight friends are invited to celebrate their heterosexuality!) However these parades serve another crucial purpose- that of sending a message to those still struggling to come out of their closets- a message that tells them that they're not alone in their struggle.

As for the question of a straight pride day, I am only reminded of the old anecdote where a child asks his mother why there is no kids' day like a mother's day or a father's day, and he's told by his mom how every single day is a kids' day! Can't these finger-pointers see the simple fact that every single day is similarly a straight pride day too? On which day of the year is a straight person ashamed of revealing the fact that he or she is straight? Is there a single day when a straight person

might be apprehensive of telling someone that they're into a relationship with a person of the opposite sex? Can gay people be so confidently out without even the slightest fear of a negative outcome? Until that day comes, gay pride parades are going to remain as relevant as ever.

A very queer subset of the 'homophobe's allies' group is what I refer to as the 'homosexual hypocrites'. The homosexual hypocrite is a drawing room intellectual (you will NEVER see him at a pride parade, or even at some place as innocuous as an LGBT film festival), is definitely not out to his close family members and friends, considers himself 'straight looking', and despises the vibrant drag culture of our community as something rather animalistic. I call them hypocrites because whatever highfalutin intellectual talk they preach sitting in their living rooms flies in the face of their own internalized homophobia and almost paranoid closeted lives. The tolerance they expect from straight people is not in the least bit displayed for the minorities within the LGBTs- especially the transgendered community. And apart from asking the hypocritical question of "Why gay pride when there's no straight pride"; upon being confronted with his own closeted life, his first and last line of defense is always this-

"Straight people are not out about their sexuality. Then why should I be?" Straight people are not out! Who are we fooling here? They may not 'announce to the world that they're straight', but that's because they don't need to. All the time they talk about their boyfriends and their girlfriends, their husbands and wives, without giving the slightest thought to the fact that in doing so they are being 'out' about their heterosexuality. Can any of these gay people who put that question be so frank with their straight friends about their private lives and relationships?

But I want that to happen. I want gay and lesbian people in my country to be as comfortable with their sexuality as straight Indians are. I want our LGBT adolescents to grow up in an environment free of harassment and self-loathing. I want the law of the land to ensure absolute equality in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Indian constitution by the founding fathers our nation.

That is my vision. That is my 'homosexual agenda'.

(Udayan blogs at www.rainbowrays.blogspot.com and had also written with the pseudonym 'Nipun')

Selective Counsel

GURLEEN
KHANDPUR

I recently had an interesting conversation with a pastor who invariably counsels. She (I didn't know they could be a she!) is doing a postgraduate degree in counselling in order to avoid being a quack and providing (another word for genuine) help to people when asked. She is genuinely compassionate, spirited and a wonderful person altogether. The problem, in my view, then, arises not in her faith but in the implications of it. You will understand where I am coming from as you see how our conversation unfolded. Continuing with our story, in the flow of our conversation I asked her if and how they counselled homosexuals. This is what she told me.

"We help them get out of it. We have never yet gotten a homosexual who believes what he is going through is

natural and is ok with it. Everyone who has approached us has been suffering with it and they have always approached us in order to get rid of the affliction and lead a normal life. They have had major feelings of guilt regarding their behavior. They never chose to be homosexuals, most were forced. So, you see, there is no conflict there. We all have the same belief system. We have provided them with therapy and worked with them in order to get rid of this behavior and most are leading satisfied lives now."

There are varied dimensions of this issue that have varied implications.

In this situation both the counsellor and the counselee agree on what the problem behavior is. Both have an agreed perspective on what the ideal outcome should be and the corrective course of action that implies. Problem solved, everyone is happy.

Everything seems right with the situation but a vital

assumption has been made here that makes the situation ugly or at least creates the possibility of it being so. The assumption being that "Because the counselee's point of view matches mine it must be right and since we're all agreed, let's move ahead with it." Assuming that the point of counselling is not for the counsellor and the counselee to agree in their beliefs, but in providing conditions for maximizing self-awareness and growth of the counselee enabling him to live a fulfilling life, there are many issues that arise.

In cases as such, is there the freedom to explore alternatives? For instance, could it not be that the counselee in this case is feeling guilt and self hatred because his beliefs are shaped by a society and a religion that he has learned to believe in since before he realized what belief means and what he is feeling now, his homosexual inclination, is in such sharp contrast with those predefined values that it is creating intolerable

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conflict within him. (Not because homosexuality is unnatural and a sin/disorder and hence obviously he feels this way.)

If the counsellor realizes this through his interaction with the counslee, and therefore helps the person deal with the guilt and the self recrimination without “working through the behavioural issue” in a way so that he can lead a “normal life” but help him accept and flourish within his identity as a homosexual, it would help the person escape the fate of living with lifelong guilt and suppression of his sexual and human expression in relationships.

Yes, this comes from my belief that homosexuality is an absolutely normal form of sexual and self expression. However, my

beliefs don't matter. Point of the matter is that in the first case the counsellor's beliefs did come in the way of a holistic examination of the matter that might not have given the counslee complete facts and a chance at making his own choice.

Could his pre formed beliefs have been strong enough that he would reject his homosexuality anyway?” Of course. And in that scenario the earlier course of action would have been apt. I would have done the same were I the counsellor in that case (despite my belief to the contrary) and the decision of the counslee would have been an informed choice. This case may apply to the set of people who are indulging in homosexual behavior but do not have a homosexual

inclination (cases of forced sex or situational homosexuality like in jails etc.).

In case the counsellor operates from the first paradigm, it does not even allow the possibility of a different outcome than that which has been agreed upon before the process even begins which completely belies exploration and growth. A little like the scientist who assumes the hypothesis and then operates from the experimenter's bias to do only those experiments that prove the assumption.

Moving beyond the issue of homosexuality and to the principal of the argument:

We just cannot be selective counsellors; rather, let us be selective counsellors if need be, not taking on cases

wherein we operate from a fixed point of view and work with it rather than counselling selectively. Be it any case and any belief. For example a pro-lifer, if he lets his view interfere with his counselling should probably not counsel a girl who is of the same view and is pregnant at the age of 15 with a rape and financially, socially and emotionally unable to care for the infant. Could she anyway choose to have the child and give it for adoption? She could. And she should if that is what she feels is right and that is precisely the point, it is about her feelings and choices; not mine, not yours. If as a counsellor/coach/helper we cannot provide her with that then it's a conspiracy, not counselling; especially if she agrees with us.

Travel Guide



What to SEE: Place de la Bastille, Le Louvre, Champs-Élysées, Le Marais, Avenue de l'Opéra, The Père Lachaise Cemetery, Gay playwright Oscar Wilde's tomb.

Where to STAY: The Ritz (15, place Vendôme, 1er; +33-1-43-16-30-30; from 730 EUR, suites from 970 EUR), The Castille (33- 37, rue Cambon, 1er; +33-1-44-58-44-58; 390+ EUR, suites 790+ EUR), Hôtel Henri IV (25, place Dauphine, 1e; +33-1-43-54-44-53; from 35 EUR, no credit cards).

Where to EAT: Le 3, Le Petit Picard, Anahi, La Fountain Gourmande are some of the yummiest plus gay friendly restaurants in the city.

Where to HANGOUT: L'Open Café, Le Carré, The Banana Café, Tropic Café and Mixer Bar are the most happening gay hangouts in Paris that you wouldn't like to miss out on.

TRAVEL

London dreams



Rohit K. Dasgupta

Old Compton Street has a rich layer of history attached to it. Located at the heart of Soho, London, this street is termed the gayest street of London. It is host to three of the most popular queer bars of London- GAY, KU, and Village. This is also the street where Arthur Rimbaud supposedly spent hours altogether with his lover Verlaine. If this mark of 'decadence' intrigues you, walk straight ahead and you reach Comptons, Green Carnation and several other swanky pubs which play host to the thriving queer community of London.

The London gay district is strictly divided into two major areas- Soho and Vauxhall. Soho is obviously swankier and pulls in a greater crowd thanks to its West End location. Gay tourism in London is pretty existent and thriving- The Pink Walk takes one around the major gay areas of London and some of the historical sites of gay activism and gay figures. For the gay tourist coming to London- the place will never cease to disappoint. Heaven on Villiers Street near Charing Cross is one of the largest and most popular gay clubs. With four large dance floors it accommodates around a thousand revelers each night as it belts out classics like Gloria Gaynor to Lady Gaga.



TRAVEL

The South Asian gay populace is quite active in London too. They run two very active night clubs- Club Kali and Urban Desi which take place once a month and it brings South Asians from all part of the city and country. (In fact the last time I went to Kali, I met someone who had come all the way from Manchester) The Naz project, London and ELOP are among the several NGOs which are working towards community building and provide help for the queer groups in the city and are always ready to offer help to the odd tourist who wants more information on gay life in London.

There are many places where one can stay during their time here. Russell Square, Soho and Kings Cross have many hotels which are mid range and because of their central location, travelling becomes really easy. Many Facebook groups like the LGBT student network-London and Twitter offer regular updates on events, but if you are simply looking to cruise and maybe have nice drink with a few mates just walk into Soho and you will be in a different world!



Travel Guide

What to SEE: If you're a first-timer, see Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Tower Bridge, Big Ben, St. Paul's Cathedral, Trafalgar Square, and kiss your mate in Piccadilly Circus just to say you did it (the little statue of Eros represents the god of love).

Where to STAY: The Soho Hotel (4 Richmond Mews; +44-207-559-3000; from £295) is smack-dab in the middle of Soho, the gayest part of London's West End.

Where to EAT: Momo (25 Heddon St., W1; +44-20-7434-4040; £14-24), located just off Regent Street, is one of the most happening places to eat. Maison Bertaux (28 Greek St., Soho; +44-20-7437-6007; £2-5), lying just off Old Compton Street, in the heart of London's gay village.

Where to HANGOUT: Ku Bar (75 Charing Cross Rd., W1; +44-20-7437-4303), 79CXR (79 Charing Cross Rd., W1; +44-20-7734-0769), Rupert Street (50 Rupert St.; +44-20-7292-7141).

G.A.Y Bar (30 Old Compton St., W1; +44-20-7494 2756) are some of the gayest bars to hangout with your pals.

Je t'aime Paris!



Sutirtho Ganguly

.....

Last September, when I discovered that I would be going to France for some official work, I thanked my stars and immediately planned to visit Paris, even if it was just for a day! Later on, when I got the actual fixture, I figured out that I could afford two days for Paris and I had to meticulously plan the maximum number of places that could be covered in those days. Ever since I had read and seen 'Da Vinci Code' it was a dream to go to the Louvre and check out the diva passiona – Mona Lisa.

Paris is about 750 km away from Montpellier, a small town near the Mediterranean Sea, the place for my official visit. I took a TGV from Montpellier Saint Roch railway station and it took about three and half hours to reach Paris Gare de Lyon station. It was early morning, about 9:00 AM. In India, I would expect that distance to be covered in about 12 – 14

hours. The train was moving at such a high speed that initially I felt my ears ringing. The journey gave views of picturesque landscapes, swirling small rivulets and a picture perfect European country side – the ones I had seen in movies or National Geographic till date. The farmhouse had a setting with green pastures in front of them where plump cows were grazing nonchalantly.

Somebody had told me that France was the first country in Europe to embrace gays and accept their sexuality. I had not researched on that, but what I saw on the train and immediately after reaching Paris was not a scene I see every day, even when I am in USA, the place that is seen as the most liberal in terms of alternative sexuality! (I tell you – that's a myth about the US, I have felt that quite well and I wish I could think that out loud!). Indeed, when I got down at the station, two guys who had been sitting opposite to me on the train sealed their lips in a kiss for more than a moment, hugged each other warmly and, I would believe they had to depart in opposite directions.

"Welcome to Paris!" I said to myself, and was quite impressed at the way I was given a hint that people don't even bother about your sexuality here!

I went to the welcome center.

"Bonjour Monsieur! Comment puis-je vous aider?" A sweet lady asked.

"Bonjour Mademoiselle! I speak just English; can you please help me plan my Paris visit?" I asked for guidance.

The lady helped me with a plan to cover the places on my list in a span of two days. She gave me a map and a welcome booklet – Paris Visite. Interestingly, when I browsed through that, a section came up on gays! The heading of that subsection was: A city with open and tolerant attitude. It had the following information (as-is cited from Paris Info):

Paris is a city with an open and tolerant attitude, where you can be your own person and there's something for everyone. The capital boasts a myriad of gay or 'gay-friendly' addresses, largely to be found in the first 'arrondissements' on the Right Bank, around Châtelet and Hôtel de Ville, and at the heart of the Marais district (4th 'arrondissement'). You'll find dozens of bars and restaurants here flying the 'rainbow flag' and a great choice of stylish boutiques for clothes or home decor, travel agents, etc..

Check out what's on offer on the Paris gay scene: guides, associations, services, clubbing, events... in all the colours of the rainbow.

A plan to find out more on gay life in Paris was not in my scheme of things, and so I didn't try to figure out a way how I could fit that in.

After spending about four hours at Musée du Louvre, seeing the enchanting Mona Lisa, other famous paintings like "Madonna of the rocks", the "Raft of Medusa", and sculptures and various other relics, I decided to visit the Tour Eiffel.

TRAVEL

Regarded as a very romantic spot, (friends suggested: "Take along your sweetheart to Eiffel" – which, unfortunately, I didn't have at that point of time) Eiffel tower reminded me of a scene from the movie *Mera Pehla Pehla Pyar* where Ruslaan proposes to his girl friend at dusk in front of the tower. How I craved I had someone with me! I was dampened by the mere site of the tower, and the loneliness gripped me even more when I found guys holding hands and kissing each other near the green patches adjacent to the tower. Luckily, I made friends with three more Indian guys, and the tour of Eiffel to the top, the scintillating view of Paris by the night and the chilly wind was not lonely anymore. There were Indian hawkers, selling Eiffel tower miniatures. They were cheap and I could bargain, so I bought two. The Eiffel tower is made to glow every hour with lots of blinking lights. It presents a grand spectacle. There is also a light and sound show that happens around 8:00 pm.

I decided to walk from Eiffel to Arc de Triomphe – the victory arc build by Emperor Napoleon in 1806. I had to cross the Seine river and walk by its sides and follow a trail to reach the place. This was as per instructions from one Punjabi hawker. He was quite helpful in making me learn a few phrases in French like "Où est-Champs Elysées?" (meaning – where is Champs Elysées?). He told me that the Arc was near that place, so if I went there I could see it. He suggested me to take a metro, but I preferred walking as I wanted to see the Eiffel Tower across Seine.

As I had a brief assumption about the gay scenario in Paris by that time, I didn't find it awkward to see guys making out along the pavement besides Seine, while I was walking. I saw few guys sitting together and hugging each other, some even shedding tears and sharing their grief. Isn't that something that every person wants? To have a companion to share your life, to have acceptance in society like a straight couple, to see that homosexuality is no more a taboo? For a moment, I fell in love with the city!

Arc de Triomphe looked gorgeous with the lights. I had seen it atop Eiffel and then I was very close to it. It had nude French youth against bearded German warriors. I clicked couple of pictures and then headed towards my French lady's house where I had arranged to stay, thanks to my network of friends. Her name is Alice and she stayed near St. Ambroise metro station and she gave me an algorithm to follow in order to decipher her house! I had to dial two codes on the num-pad in order to unbolt the doors of her house. Alice looked like Shakira! Seriously, she was a very beautiful young lady and we discussed our cultures and she could associate with my thoughts quite seamlessly.

The next morning I followed my plan and trailed along quite well. I managed to find an Indian guy and convinced him to come along with me so that we could click each other's pictures instead of asking strangers to do so, and explaining everyone how to handle the camera! We visited Cathédrale Notre Dame de Paris, Pantheon and Napoleon's Tomb at Les Invalides. Then we followed a broad roadway that culminated into Champs Elysées (pronounced shawmpe-elyzees). Once again, I could see the Victory arc at that place. Champs Elysées is a very haute avenue in Paris with its collection of shops, cinema halls, restaurants and posh



hotels. It is one of the most costly strips on earth with sky-soaring rents as high as € 11 Million.

Later, we planned to go to Moulin Rouge. It is near a metro station named Pigalle on Boulevard de Clichy. There was a long queue of folks, trying to get into the first show of the day, starting at 6:00 pm that cost €13. I had to board a train for Montpellier at about 7:30 pm and so didn't have the chance to peek in. Not that I was very much interested to see the partially nude girls performing inside. The atmosphere outside looked quite electrifying; I could scent a bit of the environment that could be inside.

I hurried back to Paris Gare de Lyon station to board the TGV to Montpellier. I decided to collect few Eiffel key rings from a near-by memento shop. The shop had a section for magazines and to my pleasant surprise there was a complete rack dedicated to gay magazines.

I might want to go back to Paris someday, and spend some time visiting the different places I missed out. Perhaps the city is the place to be, especially when it has accepted the gay community, something that is still unthinkable in so many parts of the world.

TRENDS FORECAST FOR THE SPRING

From major fashion weeks across the world

PARIS

All photos courtesy gqstyle.com

Belt Statement

There were some interesting belts on the Paris Spring Summer 2010 menswear catwalks, with Ann Demeulemeester doing large leather belt, Hermes placing simple but interesting shapes low on the waist, and John Galliano using layering and multiple belts to draw interest to the waistline.



Mixed Up Prints

Comme des Garçons, Dries Van Noten, and Lanvin all mixed up their prints to make for colorful looks on the catwalk.



Shine On

Lanvin and Paul Smith were two of many designers using shiny fabrics on their catwalks.



Slouching Story

The mood was lazy and slouchy for Spring Summer, seen through the loose clothing, effortless attitudes, and laid-back manners at Paul Smith, Louis Vuitton, and Dries Van Noten.



Weekend Bags

The key bag shape for men next spring is the weekend or over sized bag, seen at Louis Vuitton, Hermes, and Dunhill.



LONDON

All photos courtesy elle.com

Bright Contrasts

Designers mixed bright, contrasting colours for the Spring Summer catwalks. Paul Smith mixed red and pink with a pale blue, while Josh Goot mixed coloured geometric shapes on his mini dresses.



Pleating Fancy

Unusual shapes or placing of pleating created volume and interest on dresses at Erdem, Marios Schwab, and Louise Goldin



Modern Hippie

Long skirts, peace signs, patchwork, and denim vests were part of a Modern Hippie look for Spring Summer 2010. See Twenty8Twelve and Aquascutum for styling ideas.



MILAN

All photos courtesy elle.com

Accessorized Dresses

Working from basic shapes, designers have accessorized their evening pieces with tassel trim at Dolce & Gabbana, beadwork at Gucci, and caging at Alberta Ferretti.



One-Shouldered

DSquared2, Giorgio Armani, and Emilio Pucci all presented one-shouldered silhouettes in their Spring Summer 2010 collections



NEW YORK

All photos courtesy elle.com

Outrageous Prints

Prints are bold, bright, and outrageous for Spring Summer 2010, with a lot of designers choosing to mix up different shocking prints. Anna Sui's prints were 70s inspired, seen on mini dresses and tights, while Thakoon mixed up different colored prints in his signature draped dresses



Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

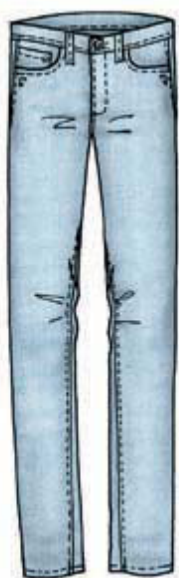
Betsey Johnson and Anna Sui are known for creating collections that can bring a smile, however, for next Spring Summer, "fun" is the key word in how women will be dressing. Bright colors and entertaining accessories, "styled with a smile" will feature in day and evening wardrobes, particularly for those with a sense of humour



A fresh new you this spring

Pink Pages brings to you four new looks for this spring. So shed those old autumn leaves and don a new coat of spring flora (I could use a Gucci one, por favor!)





POPULAR APPEAL



Alternatively chic and more wild

A woman-child with a retro look set in a Twin-Peaks universe. She looks like Mom and he looks like Granddad. A playful, girly mood juggling vintage patterns and faded 60's and 70's Americans colors creates a mundane atmosphere with a twisted angel.

Colors

A cheerful, yet slightly faded range evoking 70's colors, which seem to have been softened in the washing machine. Muffled tones: pale blue, faded beige, soft khaki. A range completed by more intense hues of yellow or violet with stronger accents of red or sky blue.

Silhouettes

A blend of retro elegance à la Jackie O reworked more romantically with fitted, high-waisted, slim-bust jackets and tops with jewel-like embroidery worn with mid-knee length, slim pencil skirts or Capri pants ... and the campus inspiration of worn denim mini blousons and high school tops paired with tulle tutus.

Men

70's style, composed of bell bottoms trousers, floral shirts and fitted jackets. A rock vintage spirit with military jackets and boot-cut jeans. Retro campus style with a polyamide blouson worn with a baseball T-shirt and bleached snow-colored jeans.

Fabrics

They cultivate a vintage mood with cottons and wool being worked to seem used, faded, softer and suppler. In a 70's, sporty mood, a range of relaxed fabrics: supple denims, thick canvases, casual fleece, washed out, checked yarn-dyes. A more sophisticated, Halston style of chiffons, crepes and satins for a femme fatale look.





ODE TO NATURE



An homage to nature

Modern ceremonies, half-pagan, half-religious, which evoke the goddesses and vestal virgins of Antiquity, pre-Raphaelite paintings and symbolism. A romantic, spiritual, poetic appeal.

Colors

A soft, serene palette with kaolin accents. Chalky, light, faded, powder and talcum colors are accompanied by more intense shades of taupe beige and mauve. A range of dynamic, springtime pastels is added to this base: pink, greenish yellow, orange, vibrant green.

Silhouette

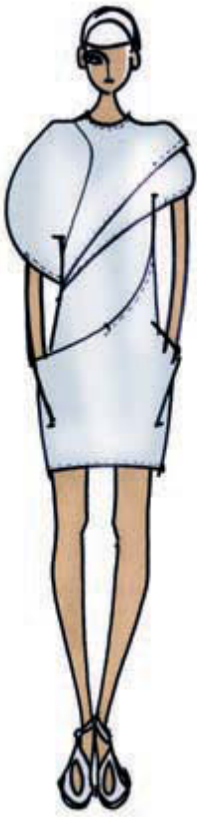
It is stretched in length to emphasize vertical structure for skirts, dresses, tunics or fluid, vapory pants. The antique toga inspires one-piece garments like cover-up or T-shirt dresses and jumpsuits, but also details such as random drapings, drawstring shapes, twisted effects, knots or braids. The accent is on elegant ease: pants adopt the suppleness of pyjamas while fluid jerseys soften a tailoring mood.

Men

A nonchalant look, minimal, elegant and sober treated in a supple, almost homewear style: limp volumes, large comfortable shapes, naturally crinkled aspects, rolled hems & finishes.

Fabrics

They are light and fluid: crepe, crepon, voile, gauze or fine tulle are worked alone or in layers for a young, romantic mood. In a natural atmosphere, we see refined, rustic effects: muslins or silk shantung worked in light weaves. In complement, vegetation or natural motifs are sometimes blurry or undefined.





LIGHT TECH



Back to the future

A new beginning showing optimism and progress. Technology becomes playful in a sweet way. A new positive high-tech is restarting with references to the naivity of the 50ies.

Colors

Fresh, acidic tints that evoke chemical elixirs and experimental emulsions. The flashy, slightly pop colors of vitamin-charged smoothies: green, pink, turquoise, yellow and acidic orange. They are accompanied by a second range of more faded and somewhat veiled, grayed tints.

Silhouettes

A blend of functional, resolutely modern strictness in 60's structured shapes. We see clean appeal, sharp-cut lab coats or absolutely simple basics reworked in luxurious, technical fabrics. References to medical bandages and an 80's sporty mood in fitted pieces are also forthcoming.

Men

A very clean style in fresh colors, this simplicity enables the experimentation with new associations and new manners of wearing garments.

Fabrics

taffeta, coated canvas, cotton, jacquard and thick linen. Textured surfaces with miniature motifs in clean, precise graphics. Elsewhere, a futurist mood is illustrated by synthetic, compact, girdling fabrics with technical finishes. Transparent harmonies and layerings are more refined.





SOUTHERN FOLK



We head to South America

A creative melting pot in a mix of influences and civilizations. From this universe, we rediscover both the appealing glamor of seductive movie actresses like Maria Felix and the humble elegance of traditional folklore outfits.

Colors

Vibrant, joyous party tints in slashes of color. Blazing red and deep violet blend with more neutral shades evoking dry, South American landscapes: ochres, clays, beiges, cactus greens.

Silhouettes

They take into account Latin America's diversity. A military uniform mood reworked with a city attitude. Big, rustic shapes inspired by Indians and ornaments, which take their cue from Aztec motifs. But also: defined waists, the tapered, chic lines of gauchos, 50's seductive women and tango artists.

Men

The silhouette is inspired by retro-Hispanic elegance, black-trimmed jacket and floral shirt. The preppy look in a bad boy version from the Latino districts - full of fantasy. The "resort" style nylon jacket is sportier and more modern calling on the comeback of boat shoes.

Fabrics

A folklore inspiration: rough looks, rustic weaves, fresh cottons resembling household linens. On a more refined note: laces and macrames. A more precious inspiration with fabrics decorated by opulent ornaments, embroideries and appliqués.

The touch generation is here

Samsung Omnia HD

For those who want to show off, Samsung Omnia HD is the most awaited phone. It's an all-in-one device sporting the largest (3.7-inch, 360x640 res) AMOLED screen to have ever been integrated on a cell phone in recorded history. The screen is simply to die for, as anyone that's seen an OLED display in action can attest. Deep blacks, rich colors and pin sharp resolution really make



every frame from this phone stand out, and it's very easy just to spend time showing your friends just how beautiful your new handset' screen is. The OMNIA HD runs on a Symbian OS modified with manufacturer's TouchWiz 3D interface, giving it the ability of multitasking and stability. Making the switch to capacitive technology makes the use of stylus impossible, and the screen is so large that you shouldn't ever need one, but the response time and accuracy is greatly improved. The manufacturer has

managed to pack all the features in a 12.9 mm. thin body. The DLNA technology on this phone makes it possible to connect it to other branded devices (for instance, a PlayStation 3) or you can watch your HD content on TV. Thanks to Samsung's 5.1 virtual surround sound system (the same as it uses on its notebook range) the music was impressive and loud. The 8-megapixel camera that allows HD video capture and playback makes it a pioneer among all the cell phones on the market. Battery life is pretty impressive; 2 days easily with standard day to day use (which includes heavy video watching). Wifi enabled gives an edge on browsing. The only catch here is the price...it's not everybody's c

Nokia 5800 Xpress music

Nokia might be late in the touch market but its here with a boom. With its new 5800 touch. The 5800 sure doesn't seem like it's out to be an iPhone killer but it works its way very well keeping things very simple in the Nokia way by just adding the Touch feature to what it best owns; Symbian. Though the body is all plastic the design is good it's like a candy bar. The rubberized finished at the back gives nice feel. The 3.2 inch screen is good with nice touch responsiveness. The Accelerometer of the 5800 is pretty sensitive. The phone switches between landscape and portrait seamlessly but without any transition, hence it doesn't feel as smooth as the iPhone. The touch inputs are of different types, this phone gives you many options to type like normal, mini Qwerty, or full Qwerty. The bundled

stereo headset is no good for such a premium music phone, so I'd advise you to pick a decent pair of headphone or in-ears to experience the sound quality that the 5800 is capable of delivering. In all I must say this phone with the present price tag is very good, almost in accordance with the given features.



iPhone

Many came but none could conquer the charm of an iPhone. It is relentlessly stuck on the first place, fighting all its completion by its app-heavy system. In many ways, the 3GS is a mirror image of the iPhone 3G; physically there's no difference. Majority of the stuff is done on the inside, with a tweaked CPU, new internal compass, larger capacities for storage, and improved camera. The release of the 3GS marks the launch of iPhone OS 3.0, a major jump from previous versions of the system software adding features like cut, copy, and paste, stereo Bluetooth, MMS, tethering, video recording, landscape keyboard and many more.

The RAM is said to have improved and Apple has changed the previous graphics chip with a new version. All this basically means that end users will see a noticeable difference in application loading times. The camera has been upgraded to a 3MP from 2 but that's not all. The real change is done by adding the autofocus option giving the users the freedom to tap and focus.

One more main addition was that the company has actually stuck a compass inside the new 3GS. In practice, the inclusion of a hardware compass is actually really helpful when it comes to navigating a new city. You now have the option to not only locate your position via GPS, but orient the map to the direction you're facing.

Other than these the landscape keyboard and improved battery life add to the sizeable list of why the iPhone is still everyone's favourite when it comes to touch devices.



N900

According to me, N900 was a desperate attempt from Nokia to beat the iPhone 3GS, and not a bad one I must say. N900 is what they call a mobile internet device and a Smartphone. N900 is a landmark in the history of Nokia, for this is the first time they have used Maemo 5 (open source) as its default operating system, something that has never been used for phone functionality before. Maemo places a lot of emphasis on multitasking. For example, when you're running an application, the dashboard icon on the top left gives you quick access to other current open apps. From the dashboard, the icon changes to the application menu icon, where touching it gives you access to all your available apps.

The Nokia N900 has a 3.5 inch touch screen display with an 800 x 480 resolution, that means a pixel density of 267 pixels per inch (PPI). The more pixels you have in an inch, the more information they can represent, and hence the clearer and sharper the picture. Believe me when I say the display on the Nokia N900 is sharp.

When Nokia says it's a mobile internet device trust me they are not joking. With N900, the days are gone when you had to open pages specially formatted for mobiles; the web browsing experience is closer to what it's like using a computer at home. And yeah, it can support the full version of Google Wave without a glitch!



iPAD

I think this one was the most awaited product by Apple. The discussions about what it's be finally names started months ago on Twitter. Very interesting suggestions were flowing in, but on January 27, when Steve Jobs announced that the device is called the iPad, the first reaction was WHAT!!

About the looks? Well what should I say, it's like an iPod touch, a really BIG iPod touch. The Apple iPad has a 9.7" display with a 1024 x 768 resolution with LED backlight and uses IPS technology.

The iPad is powered by a 1GHz Apple A4 custom designed processor, designed for high performance and low power consumption. Considering that today's smartphones have a gig under their hood, the iPad's is not much for it's size but still runs smoothly.

The iPad comes with its own set of applications, namely an iTunes app, a new Calendar, new Mail, new Safari, new Photos , new YouTube (with HD support), new iWork and even a new Google Maps, which on a device that big looks really amazing. Sorry folks but still no flash support.

With the iPad, Apple is also announcing their new e-book service, called the iBook. E-books appear on your Bookshelf of the iBook application and from there you can just click on it to read it. As usual Apple has added some extras to the application. So when you turn a page in the e-book, you are actually turning a virtual page on the screen, which moves with such an ease, just like a real page. If there's one thing I can compliment Apple technologies on, it has to be the interactive displays and the brilliant transitions which are so realistic.

To conclude, I must say that although the functionality of this device is not even close to that of a notebook, but the level of interface it provides cannot be beaten. As far as multimedia is concerned, once again the iPad is miles ahead of the notebooks available. None of them have the kind of display quality that it offers, or the audio quality.



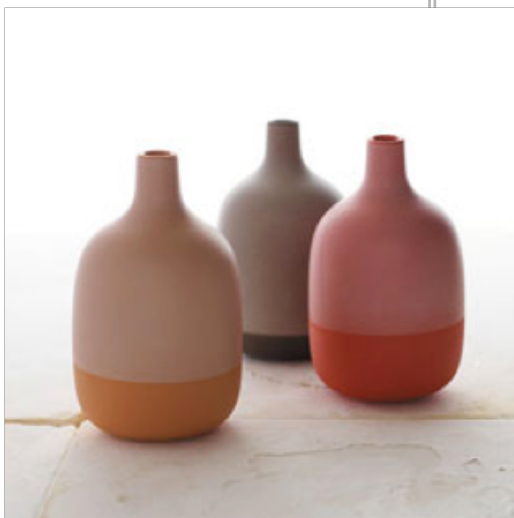
Décor a la casa By Puneet

PINK PAGES BRINGS YOU THE BEST OF INTERNATIONAL INTERIOR DECORS. BECAUSE GAYS AND BEAUTIFUL THINGS OUGHT TO GO HAND IN HAND!



*Pollack Lodge,
Rebound, and Oasis*

Accessories



Heath Ceramics Single Stem

Double vision! The double-glazed Single Stem vase collection pairs vibrant hues with minimalist design. A clay base coat is topped by a satiny second glaze that is then scraped off and fired,

creating a frosty contrast. The limited-edition run is available in three colorways: Marigold Frost, Heather Frost, and Hibiscus Frost, and each measures 4 inches wide by 6¾ inches tall. 4 1 5 - 3 3 2 - 3 7 3 2 ; heathceramics.com.

Isi Maschile

Imperfection is perfection for Venetian designer Rosaria Rattin's handcrafted Maschile porcelain tableware. Inspired by prêt-à-porter, the collection's plates and bowls bear different graphic patterns. Yet each piece is meant to mix and match, dressing your table in an ensemble of stripes, dots, and organic shapes. 39-02-832-1883; isimilano.com

Fabric:

Pollack Lodge, Rebound, and Oasis

It's not easy being green. But the Green Designs collection makes it look like a beautiful breeze. Lodge's bouclé is made of worsted wool and is rapidly renewable, while Rebound uses recycled polyester fibers to create a chenille stripe. Oasis's blend of organic cotton and bamboo is also rapidly renewable. Kermit would approve. 212-627-7766; pollackassociates.com.



Flooring



Strapped nylon carpet tile in Inspire by J&J/Invision Staggered Textures wool and banana silk rugs in Terra, Sahara, Wheatfield, Glacier, and Sandstorm by Marc Phillips Decorative Rugs



Furniture

PP Mobler Clothes Tree

Whether you fling your duds on a chair, or drape them carefully on a hanger, Cecilie Manz's starkly primitive Clothes Tree is a depot for all dispositions. Featured at Danish Crafts's Mindcraft '08 exhibition, the solid maple rods assemble to an overall size of 60 inches high, 41 wide, and 29½ deep.

pp.dk.



Textile Arts Ruhtinatar, Karmiini, and Valmuska



Finnish design institution Marimekko is breaking out spring flowers large and small with two vintage designs from Maija Isola. Ruhtinatar, the large rose, is offered in four colorways, including orange, green, and white. Karmiini, the small circular floral, comes in two colors, including green. Valmuska, the giant graphic floral and last fall's big hit, debuts in orange. All are cotton and measure 54 inches wide.

txtlart.com

Yoma Textiles Coco

Taking a cue from its namesake, Coco is keeping it simple and elegant. The cotton-linen-rayon blend comes in 10 colorways in a classic, small-weave

texture, serving as the ideal canvas for the rest of the manufacturer's patterns. It measures 55 inches wide, and is perfect for light upholstery and drapery.

yoma.com.



Kitchen and Bath

Kallista Tuxedo Pedestal

Barbara Barry puts her signature touches of class and sophistication on the Tuxedo Pedestal sink, the latest addition to the Tuxedo collection of bath products and accessories. The 32-inch-tall-by-21½-inch-wide pedestal features a rectangular top with round basin fashioned from vitreous china. It comes in either a stucco white or linen finish.

kallista.com.



Jaclo Arc Column Allegro

The soaring, stainless steel Arc Column Allegro has two spray functions for showering al fresco: an adjustable-angle rain-shower head and a foot wash. It can be fitted with a mixing



Lighting

Timothy Ben Furniture

Discussing his inverted diamond-shaped Kite pendant, Cardiff, England—based Tim Forrester says, "The cord is the jewel in the crown, as it uniquely holds the whole piece together." Composed of four radiating acrylic wedges—in clear, orange, Rot, or Blau—which encircle an incandescent bulb; the light has an adjustable cord that allows the user to set the final drop height.

timothybenfurniture.co.uk.

Orestes Suarez Lighting Mayan

The handmade Mayan pendant updates ancient art in aluminum, with 24-karat gold, bronze, brown, polished silver, polished copper, or polished or matte nickel finish. In two sizes—8-inch diameter and 12 inches high, or 12-inch diameter and 12½ inches high—the fixture connects to its 4-inch blackened steel canopy with either twisted bronze silk or black rubber wire. It accepts incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs.

orestessuarez.com.



Conque torlor cursus risus vestibulum commodo nisl, luctus

Congratulations! You've been stereotyped

Gaurav

"Hmmm...black or blue? What would look good on Gaura- !?" "Kiran, he's gay!" "Oh...so pink it is!"

The day I came out, my mom said, "Gaurav, but you're like any other guy out there!" and I was like, "Mom, that's the whole point!"

And this was to be followed by a countless number of "No you're not!" and "I can't believe you are" and "Really, are you sure!?" and what not, and that's every single time I came out.

The stereotype and stigma that gets attached to the community is inevitable; it cannot be avoided and simply cannot be crossed out. But what really can be done to stop it from spreading out is your own personal influence; to show others that just because you belong to a certain community, it doesn't mean you will, or even should, behave in a certain expected way.

Most people who are not a part of the LGBT community think that if you are gay then you talk and walk in a feminine way, put on make-up, carry a ladies handbag and curl your hand around every time you want to make a point! And if you're a lesbian then your favourite colour is black, you cut your hair short, have loads of body piercing, wear a needle-spike collar on your neck and roam around on Harley-Davidson bikes. But with understanding comes a realisation of facts and reality. Furthermore, those certain few who understand the community a little bit still stereotype when it comes to how gay couples consist of a feminine and a masculine person and lesbian couples consist of a lady with a sexy bridal dress and another a man's tux.

Media in today's world has a huge hand in painting this stereotypical image in people's mindsets. From shades of grey to all the way, the main theme of the picture is nowadays decided by the media and taken as an oh-so obvious fact by the people watching it. From Bobby Darling to Dostana, they think everything on this side of the fence is a huge perky gimmick with pansy people, glamorous fashion designers with fur around their necks and hair dressers who bitch like girls and compliment ladies on their highlights. People so gladly pin these images to their brains, jump up and down like a kid and happily forget that reel life is different from real life.

On the flipside, yes there are people who are exactly like the ones portrayed in movies or match up to (and sometimes exceed) the image you have in your head. But these are people who behave exactly the way they want to, the way they like to, regardless of what people think, and should obviously be respected for the way they are! I see nothing wrong in keeping the flame alive in your flamboyant nature as long as you like it.

The LGBT community is as diverse as the whole world in general. You will have people with different interests in different professions with a huge diversity in their personality and the way they speak! Just like the trademark of the LGBT community, the rainbow, you have a spectrum of a multitude of colours, each one of which has a different emotion and feeling attached to it, and hence constituting a unique entity, and identity. Another stereotype attached to the community is that people who belong to it are mere perverts or sex maniacs; their sentences begin with promiscuity and end with 'in my bed'. Now others attach their huge concerns on AIDS with this, a concern which in a funny way only seems to pop up when the LGBT community is mentioned. Talk to the hand I say! The ideas and thoughts about sex

Personals

depend from person to person. Personally, I follow the 'No boyfriend, no sex.' policy. Hard to believe? Well, everything is at first.

Now we've all heard it from here and there, made jokes about it. If we make a big joke out of a general perception we hold for a certain type of people, it is okay, as long as we don't mean it. But people need to realise that even though some might take these jokes in a light hearted way, some might take it to heart. Sadly we all do it at some point in our life, see it happen, but the worst scenario is when you're the one the joke is cracked on.

The Comic Valentino: The Debutante's Ball

Anwesh

Ever heard of the Coming out Ball? No! It's not a ball in which gays and lesbians come out of the closet and proclaim their sexuality to the world. It is a ball where the premier families of the society present their daughters, no older than (the fresh, flowery, in love with Byron's man, meaning little virgins) 16, to the society by their "grab a husband" shark mothers to be leered at by the young "in the market" men and groped by the older married men who don't get sex from their wives. Yes, that's the Coming out Ball. Sounds exciting, no? No!

Recently, I had a similar "ball". I have never been a party person. I have always hated the loud music, sweaty bodies, trance music scene. In the reverse order, that is. But the gay party scene always intrigued, yet eluded, me. So, one fine day, I called up my mother (my gay mother, people! Not my real one! Don't start getting any ideas here!), and said "I wanna go to a gay party!". He was so overcome with emotion, I am sure, even a gold fish would have been astounded at having being beaten at its own game! To explain, you know how gold fish open and close their mouths every two seconds?? Exactly!

I went because I thought I would get to meet a nice, hot guy and play the game "seduction for eternity". Wanna know what really happened? Nothing! My "debutante's ball" bombed on nobody but me! To be surrounded by hot guys, and not have anyone interested in you? It's like chocolate cake without any chocolate. Before arriving, I had fantasies of being OD'd on chocolate! Instead, I wanted to scream "Where's my chocolate??!!"

What's worse? Being the only sober person in the entire party. In the debutante's ball, the mothers protect their sweet little Byron loving virgins, keep a sharp eye on them, only letting them dance with the suitable boys. In mine, I had to take care of my mother! Seeing that he pukes in the bathroom, and he doesn't fall off the balcony etc....!! I have never been so mentally tried!!

Personals

And that was nothing compared to..... What? You want more dirt? Okay. I experienced another overwhelming emotion. It's called boredom!! I was so bored that I went to the seating area, picked an Asterix, and started reading. I was having more fun on the couch with Asterix and Obelix, than with the boring, sweaty, gyrating bodies in the party (according my la la land anyway)! Beat that!! And guess what?? I was attracting attention because of that too!! No, not the good way though.

Even the music was boring!! Who the hell dances to slow trance?? Do we LOOK like druggies on a high?? (Go Chandler!). I asked the DJ to change it to pop, pop rock, hip hop or Bollywood. No! He himself was so busy enjoying the music! Figures when more than half the dancers were trying to figure out how to dance on his dumb track!

When one does go to a social event, one expects that the crowd is snooty enough to be able to carry themselves. What I meant to say is that, one expects the men or women to be able to hold their drinks and not totter around. And I hope you know what I mean. If you are squeamish, you shouldn't be reading this. What really icked me out was that a single guy managed to empty his entire stomach on to the floor. Yes, he puked!! And right in the middle of the dance floor, and yes, on the floor!! You know what's grosser?? When you are dancing and you step on it. Yeah! A lot of people didn't realize they did that. Did I do it? You think I am a bimchette here?? Actually, don't answer that question.

There was one more instance that I wanted to mention. And this one took the cake. I mean literally. I just wish my Bhagvad-Gita-quoting lecturers were there to see this. Sigh. So, in the midst of all the adventures of "Dancing with the Stars" land, the DJ had the wonderful suggestion of asking the guys to remove their shirts and dance along!! I wish P!NK was there too. We would have got along like a house on fire singing along to her "Who Knew?" Anyway, who knew that DJ would actually manage to use those grey cells, eh? But that's not the point. Train your "spotlights" on two guys, both slim and hot, in their own way. One guy was bare-chested and the other had tied his shirt into a blouse kinda thing. Think the Maharashtrian fisherwoman style! And guess what the bare-chested guy was doing... Nope! He was literally licking the chest of the blouseda (can't call him blousedy or blousedette. He wasn't effeminate)! Yes! In front of everyone!! What? You don't believe me? Where do you think I saw it?? In the washroom??

Are you planning to go alone to meet new people?? If you haven't changed your mind by now, I think you need to get your IQ checked. Facebook has a lot on that. You do that while this granny is going to retire to her shell, and do some cleansing.

Until next time!

Bises

Personals

The Test...

Between Closets

Yes, I am going to dedicate this one whole topic to the worst seven hours of my life. My first HIV test. If you have an active sex life, and you are gay, there are some ground rules that you have to play by.

1. *Enjoy yourself*
2. *Be honest with whoever you are having fun with (what the heck, whoever you are fucking)*
3. *Always be safe*
4. *Take an HIV test every 6 months.*

Oh, let me start by saying again, Prepare yourself for the worst day of your life when you decide to take the test. It needs you to be determined. It needs you to be strong. And it needs you to be patient. It was one week before I was going to turn 26. I was not at all in a mood to go to work. So I called in to take the day off. Ever since I realized I was gay and had started fucking around (once you start and all you want to do is have sex with any moving thing you see, you just need to follow one simple rule "Always use a condom and lots of lube"). And I have always wanted to take a test when I began to realize what it takes to be gay. But for crazy reasons have been putting it off.

When you are gay and you do things out in the dark and with your hormones pumping, you always have to know what is going on in your body. Find the courage to find the truth about yourself.

I didn't know if I was ready to handle the truth. But I have been humping for some time now and it's time to face my demons. I had done some research on where to take the test and how it's conducted, how much it costs, will it be kept confidential and what not. I had been relocated to the US from India. But even while I was in my country I had always considered taking the test. But somehow I never made it to the clinic. But staying out in the open world alone gave me the courage to take some responsibility for my actions.

I eventually find out that the local health department conducts free and anonymous HIV testing on particular days of the week. I called up the health department and tried to find out about the procedure to get tested. They asked me to come over. So I drove to the place and damn, I got lost. There were too many departments and too many buildings close by and I couldn't find my way. After driving around the place for about 20 minutes I decided to get out of the car and walk into a building. It was supposedly the main office for the hospital and I wanted to get to the health clinic. I approached two elderly women who were probably volunteering. I told them I needed to go to a particular address and if they



could direct me there. But they were all confused and asked me what I wanted to get done. And then I had to say it-"I am here to take an HIV test". I thought they would freak out. Apparently they were nice enough to not react or say anything at least in front of me. They directed me to the second floor.

I finally went in to a room which said 'Blood Work'. The attendant there was talking to some other people. He asked me if I needed help. I hinted him to come out. But he didn't get the hint and for the second time I had to say it in front of an elderly couple. "I need to get an HIV test done". They stared at me. But I was okay and ready to fight and face anyone that day (just not ready to face anyone I know, partly because I am still closeted. And I still have to learn to do things myself.) Then the attendant asked me if I had any doctor's reference. I never thought that I need a doctor's reference to get a test done. So, disappointed again, I began to go back. I was so sure that the place I had reached was not the clinic. So I called up the helpline number again and asked them for directions.

Apparently the free health clinics are usually very small and don't have big direction signboards. So I reached the place and I had to sign into the clinic. Again for the 5-6-7-nth time that day I had to explain to everyone that I was there for an HIV test. After I filled the application form I spoke to the really nice lady there and she went through the entire procedure with me. I had requested them not to contact me and that my identity be kept a secret. I signed all the paperwork and then she told me to go to the waiting room on the lower floor of the testing clinic. So I took an elevator down and went straight to the waiting room. My wait seemed to go on forever. It had already been 45 minutes and no one had attended to me yet. I didn't know what was taking them so long. But I decided to not run away from the place as much as I wanted to. This was my chance to take a bold step and learn to spread my wings and attempt to fly. (I come from a culture which values family. We are always surrounded by people we are related to and are there when you are doing anything with your life. And there I was all alone and waiting to learn the truth; whether I had made any mistake that I may have to regret for the rest of my life.) Finally my paper work got processed and I got called in by a nurse. She was in her mid 50s or 60s. She asked me what I was there for. So I said for the umpteenth time that day "I am here to take an HIV test". She remained calm. She asked what type of test I would like to take. I didn't know a thing about it. She very politely explained to me about the tests that they carried out. Then she asked me when I wanted to know the results. I had never thought about that. She told me you could get them after a week or you could get them in an hour. Okay, I went into a daze. I could know if I had it or not in an hour. Was I ready for it? Was I willing to know? But I had to make up my mind. I said I will wait for an hour and take the results the same day. There was absolutely no way I could have slept for an entire week otherwise. But then again, if I heard anything unpleasant I could never sleep till I got to terms with myself. Finally I decided I was better off with knowing the truth. I wanted to ask all sorts of questions...would I get to see a doctor if I have it...can you counsel me...can I talk to someone? But I put a stop to my thoughts and got a grip over myself. It was too early to think about everything. I had to take this one step at a time. And breathe. So then she said "Well let's fill out some forms and then you will be put through a blood test." (I had recently watched a Sex and the City episode in which Samantha freaks out about her first HIV test...damn! I could SO relate to it now!)

Personals



So she starts asking me questions. Do you have sex with men or women? I blurted out men. She didn't look up but I was sure she had checked women. She asked me again "Sorry but can you confirm" I said "I have sex with men". She was taken back, I could understand. One thing I know is never lie to your doctor. It is bad. He is your only hope... in case something goes wrong. She continued with her questions. Have you had sex in the last 3 months? Yes. Have you had sex with multiple partners? Yes. Have you had unprotected sex without a condom? No. Have you had oral sex? Yes. Have you ever been exposed to drugs? No. Have you ever done drugs? No. After some Q & As I was finally through and she asked me to go upstairs and get the blood test done.

I went upstairs and there in the waiting room were four kids and their mother. The kids were so cheerful. But I was so not in a mood to entertain anyone. After nearly ten minutes the nurse called me in and then punctured my middle finger with a tiny prick. She asked me to go downstairs and wait. The result would be out in probably an hour. I went down to the waiting room and watched the movie that was playing- 'Home Alone: 1'. I love that movie. I still remember the time we got our first cable television when I was fifteen. I'd started watching Star Movies and that is what they use to run. I loved the series and I relived the moments. Anyway, back to the tale. I was waiting and desperately trying to flush the ghastly thoughts out of my head. I had taken a passive approach. Deal with one thing at a time and keep the fucking thoughts out. Fifty minutes had passed. I became restless. I finally saw my paper work come in. The nurse at the front desk told me that my attendant will be seeing me shortly. But then the shortly never seem to end. It was already thirty minutes and I started to think...I guess I have it. That's why the nurse isn't ready to talk to me. Probably she is getting a doctor to speak to me or trying to figure out how to tell a gay man that he is positive. All creepy thoughts began to depress me. I tried to think what if I have it. What all are the things I would have to do- 1. Get real about the reality, 2. Inform my brother. Talk my heart out to him, 3. Inform anyone I remember I had slept with and ask them to get tested (though hard, it is the right thing to do), 4. Return to my country and start living by myself. Because I am too chicken to put my family through this shit. Then in the middle of my melodrama the nurse calls me in. I was about to burst into tears but I held them back. She told me that I had tested negative. I didn't have it. She went on. The tests are accurate for the 3 months window. And I should get tested again after 3 months. But I was relieved. I didn't have it. I told myself "I don't have it...I have to love myself...and I have to be safe always". She told me to be safe and come back again in 3 months and take the test. And the next time it won't take as much time. I am surely going back and getting the test again because I understand my responsibility. When you are gay and you do things out in the dark and with your hormones pumping, you always have to know what is going on in your body. Find the courage to find the truth about yourself. You owe it to yourself and the person you are in a relationship with. Remember if diagnosed earlier there are surely many things that can help improve or expend the quality of life.

Peace.

Culture Curry

FILMS
TELEVISION
BOOKS
ARTS
THEATRE

"It was only at the age of 16 that I decided that there was something wrong in me" says Muhsin, the son of an Imam. At the age 20 he went to Pakistan to study the Koran, and began feeling guilty. Mushin says "At that time I thought, 'Okay this is it. This is what God thinks of me, so why am I still adhering to Islam when there's no space for me?'"

In *A Jihad for Love*, director Parvez Sharma looks at the attitudes of the Muslim



A Jihad for Love

Ratnesh

community towards homosexuality through brief sketches about those whose pursuit of love has brought them incredible suffering, pain, loneliness, and anger. In this documentary, gay and lesbian Muslims struggle to reconcile their sexual orientation to their devotion to Allah and their commitment to their faith.

The film captures numerous compelling stories of the struggle among Muslim homosexuals for the right to be accepted, or in some cases, to live. Mazen, an Egyptian, was arrested in a raid of a gay disco and then raped while in prison. Says Mazen "I'm sure God has a reason for all that has happened to me. I know that He is always with me." Now, he has his own apartment, a number of good friends, and a chance to belly-dance in a local restaurant. Meet Maryam, a lesbian living in Paris, who tries

to keep alive her relationship with Maha who lives in Cairo.

There are also some Muslim gay men who have fled Iran and settled in Paris where they hope to gain passage to Canada. The final section of the film introduces the Sufis, whose appreciation of Allah's love and mercy is very different from the judging Allah of the more orthodox Wahabbi believers.

The documentary was filmed in 12 countries and in 9 languages, over a six-year period. The film reminds us that in Arabic, jihad means 'struggle' not 'holy war'. A documentary not to be missed.

Beautiful Thing

Ratnesh

Based on a play by Jonathan Harvey, it is a simple and optimistic film about two boys Jamie and Ste. One is dealing with his homosexuality, the other with the brutal abusive bullying of his father and brother, both drunken lay bouts. As both boys continue exploring their feelings for one another, they discover that young love and romance can truly be a beautiful thing.

Jamie's universe is limited primarily to his apartment, and the area immediately outside of it, populated by interesting characters. Jamie tends to regularly skip classes, and his mother, Sandra doesn't know what to do with him. Sandra goes through boyfriends faster than cartons of smokes. Their neighbors include Ste on one side and an African American mother and her sarcastic teenage daughter Leah



who is fervently devoted to the 60's music of Mama Cass.

One night, Sandra comes across Ste crying after another session of violence. When she invites him to stay in Jamie's room, little does she imagine the sexual

exploration and budding romance she is setting in motion. With a lot of hesitation Jamie and Ste share their first embrace, finding something they wanted in each other. However, the next morning Ste realizes where the relationship has ended up and disappears.

Beautiful thing is a tale about normal people dealing with extraordinary feelings. It's a whole package of comedy and

drama. The moments where the movie truly sings are the moments when Jamie and Ste dance, embrace, kiss and connect. Indeed, it's a beautiful thing. It tugs on the heartstrings and in most cases will pull a tear from your socket.

Another Country



Fixing Frank

Arijeet Chandra

"If there were a pill to make you straight, would you..?" Has anyone come across this question? Among us, one may find a person who somehow, at some point of time has had to deal with this doubt, whether it is our introspective self or a third person who perceives homosexuality a choice. So, "Would you?" The movie, *Fixing Frank*, deals with the same question of identity crisis along with the contemporary hullabaloo on the adequacy (or rather the lack of it) of so-called conversion therapy.

This movie has three characters, Frank, a freelance journalist, his therapist husband Jonathan, and Dr Apsey. Dr Apsey is seemingly the 'villain', a psychologist

whose notion of homosexuality is that it is a choice. He has a yellow pill that he claims has the power to conform a s a d homosexual into a happy s a t i s f i e d heterosexual.

As movie reels on, audience not only comes across a session of plausible arguments given by Dr Apsey but also the effect building upon Frank's mind and heart. Though these logics

actually do ample harm to the lives of Frank and Jonathan, the main cause of their failing relationship happens to be something else. The story has many twists and turns. All the three characters are strong and have equal exposure throughout the movie; still Jonathan's character could have been extended. Actors have done great work, especially Dan Butler (Dr. Apsey). Butler, openly gay, has done brilliant work in the role of homophobic psychologist Dr. Apsey. The cinematography is a bit poor in some scenes, one may feel, the movie is absorbing not only because it was an adaptation of a staged play but also the theme and the way the scriptwriter has tackled the issue of conversion therapy.

This is a must watch for our community. Seldom are movies made on such themes and seldom we get to watch a good cinema like this

Another Country

Arijeet Chanrda

The film opens with a scene in contemporary Moscow where a wrinkle faced old man happens to be interviewed by an American lady reporter. As their conversation proceeds with the sips of scotch, the old man reminisces his life of his school days as "you have no idea what life in England in the 1930s was like. Treason and loyalty, they're all relative, you know. Treason to what? Loyalty to whom?" And the next scene is of an English public school, back in the days of the early 1930s, where students are coming to attend morning prayers.

Another Country is about a British born spy Guy Bennett who worked for Soviet Union. How this person becomes a spy against his own country instead becoming a diplomat for his country, is quite a tale that is spun in the script. Guy Bennett is a flamboyant, spoiled brat who has certainly great amount of inclination towards his own sex; he realizes that he is homosexual while seeking a guy named Harcourt. He confesses his love for Harcourt to his best friend Tommy Judd. Tommy is a die-hard Marxist, and has such firm faith in communism that he refuses to accept any reward such as becoming Prefect under the 'bourgeoisie' system of English public school. Seeing the prevalent hypocrisy about homosexuality within his schoolmates, Guy at last shows rebellion at the end of the movie and Tommy agrees with him - All problems solved for life. No Commies, No Queers.



Fixing Frank

This classic movie, made in 1984 in the era when homosexuals in England were still demanding their right to live freely, had created waves. With its astounding cinematography and powerful script, Another Country certainly etches onto the viewer's mind. Actors, Rupert Everett (Guy Bennett) and Colin Firth (Tommy Judd) have given excellent performances in their debut film. The movie is full of some memorable lines, for instance, Guy Bennett (Rupert Everett) while watching Harcourt from a distance says to himself "There's a little hollow at the base of his throat which makes me want to pour honey all over him, and lick it off again." And some memorable scenes too, for instance that of Harcourt's head lying upon Guy's chest on a still boat in the middle of night. One can also appreciate the mellifluous soundtrack playing along various parts of the movie. The film is uniquely engrossing in many ways.

The History Boys

Karan Sood

The History Boys, a philosophical comedy-drama, is adapted by Alan Bennett from his own play. It was directed by Nicholas Hytner, director of the original production of The History Boys at the Royal National Theatre in London, and features the original cast of the play. The portrayal of many philosophies from different perspectives is enclosed in a plot with a touch of pink. In 1983, six grammar school boys, Crowther, Posner, Dakin, Timms, Akhtar, Lockwood, Scripps, and Rudge, obtaining highest school scores, start their preparation to enter Oxford or Cambridge. The General Studies teacher, known by staff and boys alike by 'Hector' (Richard Griffiths), is their favorite, and works alongside their deputy head and regular history teacher, Mrs. Lintott (Frances de la Tour). The headmaster, Felix (Clive Merrison), hires young contract teacher Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore) to assist Hector and Mrs. Lintott. Irwin's teaching methodology was radically different from the regular teachers. Discovering Hector's homosexuality and accusations of pederasty, the headmaster insists he retires early. The story also reflects on the confusions and desires of gay student (Dakin). The journey from high school to Oxfor ds/ Cambridge through varied tracks build a highly convincing screenplay. History boys received positive acclaim from critics. The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures named The History Boys one of the Top Ten Films in its 2006 awards. Griffiths and de la Tour received BAFTA nominations for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actress, respectively. The beautiful exchange of classic dialogues deserves a onetime watch!



The History Boys

Just a question of love

Karan Sood

Juste une question d'amour, a French film by director Christian Faure is an appreciable compilation of a plethora of questions of life and desires, homosexuality and coming-out behind a single question of love. Just a question of love very well manages to bind one to discover the beauty of hanging questions till the last scene. The story establishes a love story of two gay men, Cedric (Stéphan Guérin-Tillié) and Laurent (Cyrille Thouvenin), one of whom is proudly out while the other still in the closet. Based on the theme: Do we

really love our children as we say? The screenplay and script very well revolves around the basic idea, putting light on the difficulties faced by a gay child belonging to a conservative family, on the other hand depicting the support of an understanding mother.

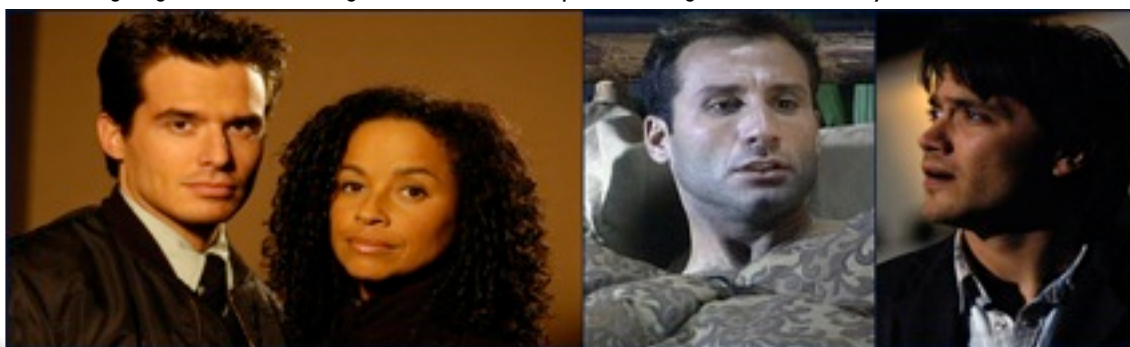
Laurent, a 23-year old college student, masks his gayness from his family by living with his best friend, Carole. During his agricultural research under Cedric, Laurent falls for him. He wants to live openly like Cedric, but certain fears stop him from doing so, whereas Cedric cares for him but does not like him to living double lives. He introduces Laurent to his mom, who accepts his son as well as his boy friend. The unwillingness of Laurent to come out to his family creates distance between them. Hence begins an intense portrayal of the test of the relationships between the lovers as well as between mother and son.



Edgar Allen Poe's The Raven

Roderick throws a masquerade ball inside a creepy mansion with a dark past. An infamous mass-murder happened there fifty years ago to the night, but that's part of the fun for the posh hotties that show up for some boozy partying. The reverie is cut short when a Raven-masked killer crashes the party, intent on repeating the bloody history of the "Ravenwood Massacre" that happened decades ago. As the unknown killer picks the guests off one by one, old grudges resurface among friends, and new suspicions emerge.

DIRECTOR: David DeCoteau
STARRING:
 Richard Johnson
 Traverse LeGoff
 Rick Armando
 Graeme Richards
 Ivan Botha
 Joy Lucelle De Gee



Deadly Skis

Earth is headed for destruction from a wayward asteroid and only Madison Kelsey (Rae Dawn Chong), a lone astronomer, is aware of it. Failing, of course, to convince the authorities, Kelsey is left with no choice but to track down our leading heartthrob, Antonio Sabato, Jr. Well, actually it's Antonio Sabato, Jr. playing an outed former Air Force colonel and this time, our hero is not only gay but also has a hot boyfriend as well! In a race against time, Chong and everyone's favorite underwear model (and sexiest man alive!) must penetrate the heavily guarded military base to gain access to the military laser in order to save the planet and its oblivious inhabitants

DIRECTOR: Sam Irvin
STARRING:
 Antonio Sabato, Jr.
 Rae Dawn Chong
 Dominic Zamprogna
 Michael Boisvert
 Rob LaBelle
 Michael Moriarty

Dante's Cove



America's sexiest guilty pleasure is back for a third season. Season three picks up as resident witch Grace (Tracy Scoggins) makes her way back to Dante's Cove seeking revenge on her sister Diana (Thea Gill). Meanwhile, a group of newcomers are sure to stir up the lives and relationships of the mostly gay and lesbian residents of the infamous Hotel Dante.

Power is shifting on Dante's Cove as an enigmatic new force makes its presence known. Bro's (William Gregory Lee) powers mysteriously begin to disappear, while Diana is curiously drawn to the developing force. Things are turned even more on their head when a former resident of Dante's Cove returns to the island and wreaks havoc on the lives of those around her. Budding romantic ties are also tested as old loves attempt to rekindle fires that once

burned. In order to fight off the new force taking over the island, an unlikely trio joins forces to restore the balance of power. The season comes to a soaring climax as the fate of Dante's Cove and all of its resident could lie in hands of one unsuspecting resident.

DIRECTOR: Sam Irvin
STARRING:
 William Gregory Lee
 Gregory Michael
 Charlie David
 Tracy Scoggins
 Reichen Lehmkuhl
 Jill Bennett

Yaraana

Reviewed by Kishore Kumar

By Hoshang Merchant
Penguin, 1999
Rs 200

Readers of this column will remember that in reviewing a certain anthology earlier, I had lamented how certain anthologies are born – and die – like water bubbles in a turbulent stream. Yaraana – Gay Writing from India unfortunately belongs to that lot, and quite clearly so.

First things first. Mr Merchant contradicts himself in the very first page of his introduction when he abhors the term 'homosexual,' but immediately, and quite unrepentantly, talks about a 'homosexual play'. He goes on to talk about 'a vast literature of homosexuality' in medieval Islamic culture soon after harping about the term homosexual being an invention of late nineteenth century European science. Expressing detest for the term homosexual when applied to a person but labeling a piece of art homosexual, brings to one's mind the hilarious but insightful joke played by Phoebe Buffay (in TV serial Friends), when she tells Chandler Bing that people think he's gay because he has 'homosexual hair.' It is only pitiful that such insight is absent here.

The failures of this anthology however, are far from being merely semantic. The next point raised in the introduction, quite abruptly, is regarding the origin and mindsets of homosexual men. Citing neither sources nor references, Mr. Merchant gives his insights. The existence of gay women is conveniently left out. And most Indian men are dubbed to be bisexual, being forced into heterosexual marriages, however furtively continuing their same-sex affairs.

A conspicuous absence from the book is that of love as a central theme. That leads to a question – what is the basis on which

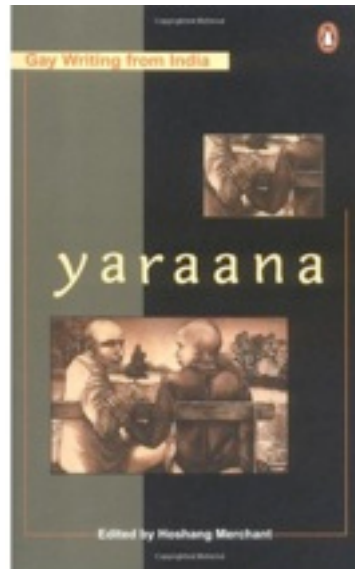
the various pieces included in this anthology were selected? There is a brief note at the end of the introduction which tries to answer this question, but doesn't do it enough justice. The criteria of selection are unclear and the time frame is vague. In other words, the anthology sets out with no stated aim, and hence does not fail any of them.

The book, however, has its moments of glory in some of the pieces included. Those by Vikram Seth and Ashok Row Kavi stand out for their quality, and some of those by Raj Rao also captivate. Many of the other pieces not only fail to captivate, but are also quite painful to the mind. If anyone would like to read what most of the book has to offer he would do better to lay his hands on a copy of Letters to Penthouse.

'I am humbled to have been entrusted with defining the historic moment for India's homosexuals through their literature, old and new, heroic or pedestrian, lovely and lovelorn or rough and ironic.' The romance in the sentence to be found in the introduction just ends there. Mr. Merchant blissfully gambles away this trust. Erratic chronicling and a lopsided and damaging portrayal of the LGBT community together should give this book a life of about twenty years, not more.

Being a young Indian gay man who has had as normal a childhood as is imaginable, has been in the surreptitious adventures of adolescence and then has been in love, I should say that I indeed related to the stories in this book, but only sparsely and briefly. This, in my opinion, is the greatest of this book's failures – the inability of its pages to reach out to a vast majority of young gay and lesbian people who languish behind their formidable closet doors.

Go ahead. Read this book. Given the scarcity and inaccessibility of LGBT literature, you might as well read it for its presence in every major bookshop. But let it be neither your first read among the anthologies of LGBT-themed works, nor the only one.



The Symposium

Reviewed by Kishore Kumar

By Plato
Penguin Classics, 1999
Rs 250

Plato (c 428-c 347 BC), was a Greek philosopher, student and friend to Socrates, and was one of the most creative and influential thinkers in Western philosophy. Along with his Republic, the Symposium lies at the cornerstone of Western thought. It concerns itself at one level with the genesis, purpose and nature of love and, at another, with the nature of knowledge: How do we know what we know?

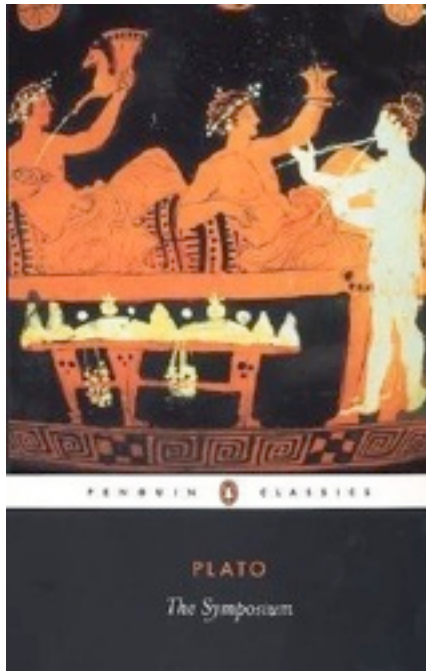
Plato's writings are all in the form of dialogues, sometimes framed by a narrator. They depict philosophical ideas being advanced, discussed, and criticized in the context of a conversation or debate involving two or more people. In his dialogues, Plato developed a two layer view of reality, the world of Becoming and the world of Being. The world of Becoming is the physical world we perceive through our senses. This world is always in movement, always changing. The world of Being is the world of forms, or ideas. It is absolute, independent, and transcendent. It never changes and yet causes the essential nature of things we perceive in the world of Becoming. In the Symposium, Plato seems to have reasoned out an internal mechanism through which men may make their way through the world of Becoming to the world of Being. He shows how, through the most mysterious and powerful medium of love, men may eventually arrive at the Highest Good, an intuitive and mystical state of consciousness. As one of the characters, Diotima, says, only in such an experience is ultimate meaning found for human beings.

Each person present at the Symposium agrees to make a speech, or eulogy, in praise of love, or precisely, Eros the god of Love. Within each of the speeches, Plato presented certain messages he sought to communicate about love and its effect on people.

The speech which opens the Symposium, by Phaedrus, speaks of love as promoting virtues among human beings, especially courage, expressed in dying for the one you love. Pausanias, the second speaker, believes love, when misdirected can lead to evil. To this he adds that evil love is that of the body and not the soul. Evil love is one that deals with the love of money, wealth or power. Love of the mind, meaning a connection with another individual separate from the physical attributes, is the only good kind of love. Love becomes destroyed when materialistic matter enters the picture. That is why in Plato love between men was viewed as a higher, more pure form of love than that between man and woman because the desires of the body cloud the mind.

In his speech, Aristophanes relates to those present the legend of Creation. In this myth, Aristophanes tells of the Greek legend of the two-faced, four-armed, and four-legged ancestors of present day humans. They were also one of three genders – male, female, and hermaphrodite. Because these powerful creatures threatened divine power, they were cut in half by Zeus. This myth

explains the innate desire of human beings for each other. The pursuit of the other half is what Aristophanes calls love. Sexual preference for one or other gender is explained by the type of combination from which we were split.



Next comes the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima. Socrates argues that love is not beautiful, but is an expression of the desire for beauty. Diotima introduces the category of intermediate or mediating entities – of love, as a spirit, mediating between mortal and immortal, combining need and resource. She analyses love as expressing a more fundamental desire: that for perpetual possession of the good or happiness. She advocates the ascent of desire from physical to mental types of beauty, culminating in knowledge of the Form of Beauty.

Love helps us find a relationship between the two worlds we live in. Employing Diotima's process of ascent, it is a movement upward to a finer sense of what love is, and as we ascend we come closer to God through love's prompting our own abilities to create, first on the physical plane, then on correspondingly finer planes in the creation of works of art, which can range from a piece of literature, to a relationship, to ourselves. Love relationships have a special potential in developing spirituality, for in searching for and recognizing the divine within the beloved, one discovers the divine in oneself, and comes to recognize that, in all its forms, divinity is one and the same. This experience is ultimately the

most meaningful of human experiences, purest and most refined in quality, and love, in all its various forms, can help one get there, again and again.

"The only queer people are those who don't love anybody." ~Rita Mae Brown

"One should no more deplore homosexuality than left-handedness." ~Towards a Quaker View of Sex, 1964

"It always seemed to me a bit pointless to disapprove of homosexuality. It's like disapproving of rain." ~Francis Maude

*"The fact that we are all human beings is infinitely more important than all the peculiarities that distinguish humans from one another."
~Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)*

"Romance and work are great diversions to keep you from dealing with yourself."

"Why can't they have gay people in the army? Personally, I think they are just afraid of a thousand guys with M16s going: Who'd you call a faggot?" ~ John Stewart

*"Some persons are likeable in spite of their unswerving integrity."
~Don Marquis*

On Vacation

Shiva Prasad

One of the most exquisite experiences that you can have in India, in public, is watching a brilliant troupe of actors and artists performing a well written, well directed, thoroughly engrossing gay themed play. Such was the experience at the premier of 'On Vacation' staged at the Taj Banjara, Hyderabad.



It was from the house of Sutradhar, a Hyderabad home grown theatre company and directed by Vinay Varma an accomplished theatre personality (he has acted in a Hollywood movie-Beeper starring Harvey Keitel and his latest film was Mukhbiir). It's originally a Marathi play 'Chotyashya Sutti' written by Sachin Kundalkar.

The overall theme was the dynamics of the man-woman, man-man relationships in modern day urban India and the vulnerable side of human as a social being.

It is set in the background of our amchi Mumbai apartment. Uttara, the feminist elitist female protagonist, is in a live in relationship with a much mellowed, less assertive, garbage in the river kind chef (on the sea) Karthik. She is a successful high flying actress basking in the glory of her new found femdom (female freedom). She considers marrying Karthik and bearing a child for him as a threat to her freedom and an encroachment of her female empowerment. Even this very strong lady feels insecure somewhere deep within and in many a situation turns out to be a conformist taking a diplomatic stance while discussing issues with journalists.

Later Cyrus, schoolmate of Uttara drops in from Canada for a short vacation along with his boyfriend Vyom. They come open to this live in couple about their relationship and share all the problems they had to face in establishing their relationship. They also express their desire to get married and adopt children.

Finally, in something of an epilogue, Karthik gists the audience on how intricate our relationships are and how varied our responses are to different situations; sometimes defending ourselves and sometimes deceiving others. One must also acknowledge the maturity of the Hyderabad audience that received this iconoclastic play so gracefully, and never showed the slightest brouhaha over even the gay kissing scene.

This is one of the rare pieces of art in India where the issue of homosexuality is very subtly and artistically dealt keeping in mind Indian sensibilities. The portrayal was very humane and not merely an act of comedy and at the same time not getting into activism, for people have after all come in for a nice evening.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Sunil Gupta



Arts Sunil Gupta's Photography

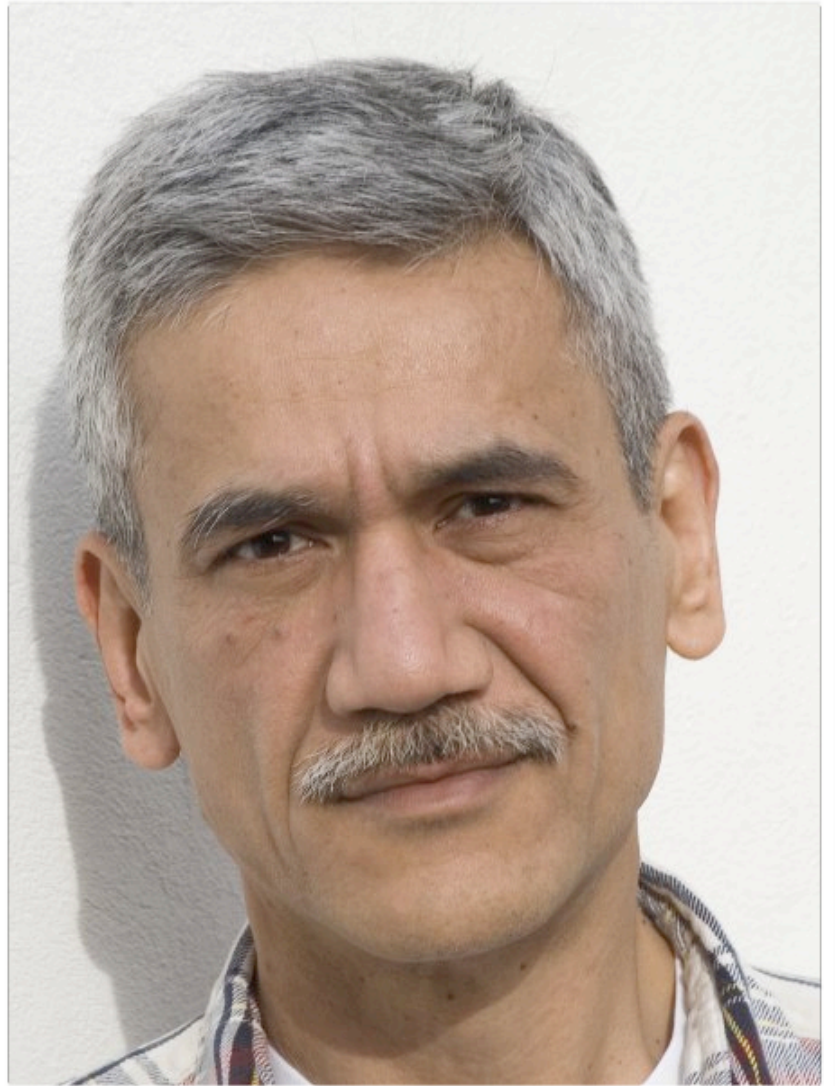
Could you tell us something about your background? Was photography always a calling?

Oh no! I first went to a business school; I had a degree in accountancy. Then, I went back to study photography. My parents migrated to Canada when I was 15. My MBA was in New York, so there I made the switch. While in Canada, I was part of the first Gay students' movement. We started a newspaper and I used to take pictures of the demonstrations for it. So, that's how it started and, in that way, photography was always tied up to what I was doing generally... I find the subject matter for photography in my own life. So, how and when did you change your base to Delhi?

Could you briefly describe essential ideas behind some of your exhibitions and books? How do you relate it to your activism?

I didn't come back here until early to mid twenties. When I was studying photography, I got a grant, to go somewhere and shoot something and I chose Delhi.

Could you briefly describe essential ideas behind some of your exhibitions and books? How do you relate it to your activism?



In **Love, Undetectable** (2009 Delhi exhibition), I felt that we had a great deal of energy surrounding the repeal of Section 377. The media was describing it in terms of sociology and legal language. Even, HIV is a condition that is highly medicalized. But as people, our lives have a significant emotional aspect too and the pictures brought that to the fore. So, it's not only about sex between same-sex; the love between same-sex is never discussed. And, the title came from HIV, the notion of 'undetectable'; people take HIV drugs these days and the idea is to remain 'undetectable', you know, the virus is undetectable. (

Mr. Malhotra's Party (ongoing Delhi exhibition) I started last year in Bangalore, and had been shooting it for over three years. It has pictures of gay people in Delhi, posing for the camera against a sort of 'everyday life background'. And, then they have their name underneath it. That's quite different from 20 years back when such people had no name and their pictures were blurred. In today's context, they are claiming a space in the society and the space that they claim is no different, it's around their everyday real-life world. They look like everybody else. So, it's a very 'outing' kind of an exhibition. I got the title from 'Pegs N Pints', the club in Delhi. When they have a party, it's always put up as a private party in a fictitious person's name. And, 'Mr. Malhotra' has a very Delhi-like Punjabi feel to it!

The New Pre-Raphaelites, had a historical reference in art. There were a group of painters in 19th century; one of them had been known to be arrested for being gay. They used painting to express their situation and I tried to recreate those in my photos using an Indian setting, you know, the Indian, colors, fabric..

A Time to Love and Imagining Childhood: Living with HIV in Delhi When I first came here, I met Anjali Gopalan and the other Naz people in the Naz Care Home in Delhi. And, of course I was interested in doing this as I am myself HIV positive. So, I met the children and I thought I would like to make some pictures, which was interesting and also difficult because children are minors; they can't give their consent. So, it was like *Exiles*, I had to show something without showing it. There are these pictures like an empty bottle on the table and a woman's (apparently, the mother's...) sari. And, I kept going back to take more pictures so, I became interested in a long term way. I thought I could follow these children as far as I can. When they are small, everybody wants to help them. But when, they are twenty, I wonder if anyone does. You know, their condition is life-long. Some of them are teenagers and, when they were told that they are HIV positive, I got involved in the process. We would have interactive workshops for them.

I was a part of a similar workshop for HIV positive people. People came from all over and shared their 'coming out stories'; how they realized they were positive and how they shared it among family and friends. You know, it's quite similar to being gay. And, everyone used different media...song, dance; I used photography. And, when people are given a platform to express themselves, it's empowering.

Homelands and From Here to Eternity was in response to my illness. In *Homelands*, I looked at it from the outside world I lived in, and I chose three locations that have been home to be over the years, Delhi, North America and London. While, in *From Here to Eternity*, I had to think about how the virus affects my life. Arts itself is therapeutic. I became a little bit estranged from my body. Especially, for a gay man, you know, it's a competitive world out there! (laughs) I had to come to terms with it and not take illness take over. I also made a video about the HIV condition, *A World Without Pity*, shot mostly in North India.

Exiles was trying to look at gay men in Delhi in the mid 80's. There was nowhere to go and no one was talking about it. It was a sorry situation. The gay men here were almost in a self-imposed exile.



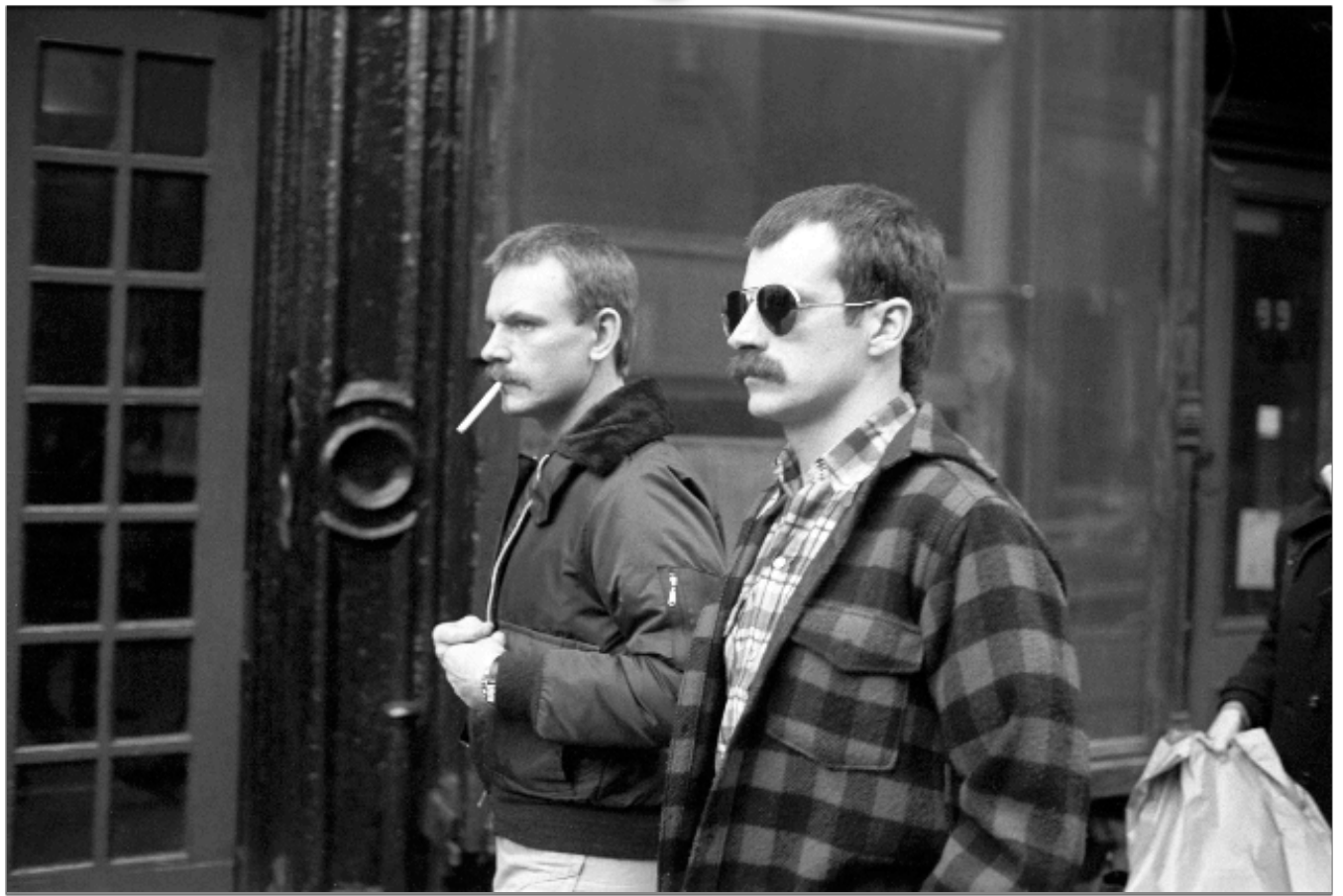
Christopher Street and Ten Years On were some of my earlier works. That was when I broke up with my first lover. We met in college and I thought it would last forever. So, I used photography as an excuse to meet other people to see what makes them tick. But, it was quite particular to where I was, in London. Christopher street was shot in NY in 1976 and that was after Stonewall, so for the first time the gay community was more 'out' and 'visible' and I would stand on street corners taking pictures.

Could you tell us about your association with NGO's and queer collectives.

I am only formally associated with Nigah. It was originally a students' movement in the JNU. Gradually, it moved out of the campus. Here we use media (meaning, literature, books) and culture(meaning plays, songs, dances) as aides to create awareness about queer issues. My contribution is to somehow have photography on the agenda. And, I work with

Delhi Queer Pride Committee whenever they organize a parade.

My association with HRLN (Human Rights Law Network) is more like a job. We made a video about access to HIV treatment in the medical setup. We shot it in different places and found that while Chennai was quite well organized, West Bengal wasn't so. In India, the HIV drugs free; there are laws but people don't know how to implement them. The idea was to spread awareness by means of testimonies of HIV positive people who survived the system. HIV positive people are quite vulnerable within their families. They get thrown out, harassed and often don't encounter AIDS activism and HIV support groups. Like last year, the judgment on Section 377 was quite complicated. So we had workshops for Hindi speaking people (usually through AIDS outreach groups) on how to use the judgment to their benefit. And, lastly, the relationship with Naaz is quite long standing.





Cases of HIV infection drop among gay men



According to the latest data released by the Mumbai District AIDS Control (MDACS), the percentage of men who have sex with men (MSMs) who have contracted the virus has dipped from 23.94% in 2000 to 8.6% in 2007. This survey was based on

random testings. Tracking the transgender community began only in 2004 when public experts found that 49.25% were HIV positive. But in 2009 (up to October), the figure has fallen to 34.9%. Said Dr Hemangi Jerajani, department of dermatology at Sion Hospital, who has been working closely with the Humsafar Trust: "There has been drop in incidence of HIV among the minorities because of the success of targeted interventions over the years". Her department, for instance, has for the past eight years worked out a special programme to help out MSMs and transgenders. It was in this department that a study done over years identified the bridge group among MSMs as the section with the highest risk behaviour.

Aishwarya Rai features in British lesbian magazine

Popular British lesbian magazine 'g3' featured Bollywood heart throb Aishwarya Rai as their January 2010 issue's 'Babe of the Month'. The feature mentioned her as the 'stunning Bollywood beauty' who's 'slunk seductively across Indian and British screens and taken the industry by storm'.



COUNTRY'S THIRD GENDER GETS OWN IDENTITY IN VOTER ROLLS

Election authorities granted what they called an independent identity to intersex and transsexuals in the country's voter lists. Before, members of these groups — loosely called eunuchs, were referred to as male or female in the voter rolls. But now, they will have the choice to tick 'O' — for others — when indicating their gender in voter forms, the Indian election



commission said in a statement.

"Enumerators and booth-level officers (BLOs) shall be instructed to indicate the sex of eunuchs/transsexuals etc as 'O' if they so desire, while undertaking any house-to-house enumeration/verification of any application," a statement from election authorities said.

ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR SUSPENDED FOR BEING GAY

LUCKNOW: An Aligarh Muslim University professor, on the verge of retirement, was suspended after some students set up cameras to catch him having consensual sex with a rickshaw-puller in his campus home, and sent the video film to university authorities. Dr Shrinivas Ramchandra Siras, reader and chairman of Modern Indian Languages at AMU, now says he won't challenge his suspension and would voluntarily leave.

Siras's decision not to question his suspension has come as a relief to AMU authorities, who are more than keen to bury the "embarrassing episode" as it could raise a serious issue of gay rights on the campus since the professor wasn't accused of any wrongdoing or criminal action. Consensual sex with a same-sex partner isn't a crime in itself.

"Siras was captured on camera having sex with a rickshaw-puller. It's a scandal that no institution of repute can overlook. Therefore he was placed under suspension on February 9 by the order of the VC, Prof P K Abdul Azis," said AMU public relations officer Rahat Abrar.

"Dr Siras lived in a house allotted to him in the medical colony on the AMU campus. On February 8, he was home in the company of a

young rickshaw-puller from Jamalpur area of the town. Since the door was open, two reporters from a local TV channel barged into the house and filmed him and his companion. The video clippings were then sent to AMU authorities who were constrained to proceed against Siras," said Abrar.

Siras was served a memo on February 9 by the office of the AMU registrar, Dr V K Abdul Jalil, under rule 403-C of the statute of the university, after a prima facie case of "gross misconduct" was made out against him. Other disciplinary proceedings would follow only after framing of charges.

Amid swirling tales of his "sordid" sexual preferences, Siras was quietly packing his bags. Talking to TOI over phone, he refused to contest the charges before any enquiry committee. "Let them say what they want to. I am not going to offer any clarification," he said. "You don't have to abuse back if someone abuses you. I am already on the verge of retirement and, therefore, would rather be gone than to stretch the issue," he said. This, the university authorities feel, "is the only respectable and sensible option under the unfortunate circumstances."

Manjari Mishra, TNN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

PROP 8 FACES FEDERAL CHALLENGE

The first US federal court case to determine whether states are allowed to ban same-sex marriages has opened in San Francisco, California. Any ruling reached is expected to be challenged, possibly taking the case all the way to the US Supreme Court. A Supreme Court ruling would determine the fate of gay marriages nationwide, without the possibility of appeal.

The suit, filed by two gay couples, challenges Proposition 8 – a ban on gay marriage in the state of

California. The law amended California's constitution to restrict marriage to a union between a man and a woman. Supporters of the challenge are comparing it to landmark cases which ended segregation in US schools and overturned a ban on interracial marriage, the BBC's Rajesh Mirchandani reports. They say the Constitution enshrines the right to marry but, by limiting it to heterosexual couples, it discriminates against gay people. Backers of Proposition

8 say the federal case is the latest attempt to overturn what they say is the will of the people



as expressed by the 52% who backed the amendment in a 2008 referendum.

CINDY MCCAIN POSES FOR AD FOR GAY RIGHTS GROUP



Cindy McCain, the wife of 2008 Republican presidential nominee John McCain, has posed for an ad endorsing pro-gay marriage forces in California. The photo shows Mrs. McCain with silver duct tape across her mouth and 'NOH8' written on one cheek. NOH8 is a gay rights group challenging Proposition 8 passed by California voters in 2008 banning same sex marriage. John McCain's office issued a statement saying the Arizona senator respects the views of members of his family but remains opposed to gay marriage. It says McCain believes "marriage is only defined as between one man and one woman."

UGANDA EYES DEATH FOR GAYS, AMERICAN CLERGY IN LINE OF FIRE

Last March, three American evangelical Christians, whose teachings about "curing" homosexuals have been widely discredited in the United States, arrived here in Uganda's capital to give a series of talks. The theme of the event, according to Stephen Langa, its Ugandan organizer, was "the gay agenda — that whole hidden and dark agenda" — and the threat homosexuals posed to Bible-based values and the traditional African family. For three days, according to participants and audio recordings, thousands of Ugandans, including police officers, teachers and national politicians, listened raptly to the Americans, who were presented as experts on homosexuality. The visitors discussed how to make gay people straight, how gay men often sodomized teenage boys and how "the gay movement is an evil institution" whose goal is "to defeat the marriage-based society and replace it with a culture of sexual promiscuity."

D o n o r

countries, including the United States, are demanding that Uganda's government drop the proposed law, saying it violates human rights, though Uganda's minister of ethics and integrity (who previously tried to ban miniskirts) recently said, "Homosexuals can forget about human rights." The Ugandan government, facing the prospect of losing millions in foreign aid, is now indicating that it will back down, slightly, and change the death penalty provision to life in prison for some homosexuals. But the battle is far from over.

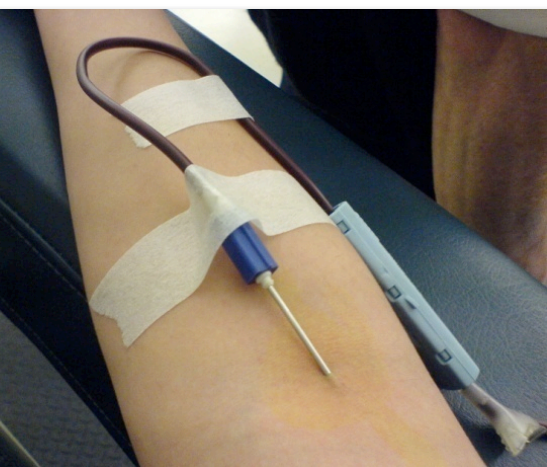
E HARMONY SETTLES LAWSUIT OVER GAY MATCHMAKING

The popular eHarmony online dating service will have to do more to welcome gays and lesbians to its site, under a proposed settlement of a class-action lawsuit announced Tuesday. The Pasadena company, which says it uses a scientifically developed questionnaire to help people find "relationships that last," didn't offer gay, lesbian and bisexual matchmaking services on its primary Web site, eHarmony.com, until last spring.

As a result of a 2008 settlement with the state of New Jersey, which sued the company for discrimination, men and women seeking same-sex matches were redirected from eHarmony to an affiliate Web site, Compatiblepartners.net. A separate class-action civil rights lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles in 2007, saying that eHarmony violated California law barring businesses from discriminating based on sexual orientation.



BRITISH GAY SON SPEAKS OUT AFTER BE- ING PREVENTED FROM GIVING BLOOD TO HIS DYING MOTHER



A gay man has spoken out after being prevented from donating blood to his mother, who died from acute myeloid leukaemia in August last year. Dij Bentley, a 21-year old student, was not certain if he was a match for his mother's blood transfusion, but even if he had been, he wouldn't have been able to help her.

The National Blood Service as well as the Scottish Blood Transfusion Service, both continue to bar homosexual and bisexual men from donating blood. Bentley was in a monogamous relationship at the time he tried to give blood. He told the Herald paper: "My eyes have been opened to this since my mum died. Maybe gay men do have the right to give blood if they want to." Sweden has already lifted the lifetime ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood, announcing that a 12-month ban would be implemented instead for those coming under the category of participating in "risky" sex, which includes both gay and straight sex. Groups including the National AIDS Trust and Stonewall are currently campaigning against the UK ban, which is now under review.

GLAAD PUTS LADY GAGA, ADAM LAMBERT AND GLEE ON NOMINEE LIST



The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) have announced the nominees for the most gay-friendly films, television programmes and performers. In an annual event, the group hands out awards for "outstanding images of the LGBT community" in the media. The names among this year's nominations are Lady Gaga, Adam Lambert, new comedy Glee, Mad Men and Quentin Crisp documentary An Englishman in New York. Skins has also been nominated for an award for fair, accurate and inclusive representation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.



EVENTS

Delhi

Gay Delhi Sunday Socials

Sunday

A weekly social gathering for gay and bisexual men. For more information on venues and timings and to know about other gay events in Delhi, join the GayDelhi email list by sending a blank email togaydelhisubscribe@yahooogroups.com

The Delhi Frontrunners and Walkers

Sunday

A weekly running/walking club for Delhi's LGBTI people. For more details email frontdel@gmail.com

Mumbai

Gay Bombay Sunday Meet

Sun, 6:00 pm

JATC (Just Around the Corner)

Bandra West. Entry free. For more details, visit the [GayBombay](http://GayBombay.com) website

Bengaluru

Gay Runners and Breakfast

Sun, 8:30 am to noon

Gay runners meet at Cubbon Park and Airlines Hotel

Contact: 98450-01168

Support Group Meeting

Thur, 7-9pm

Good As You is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender support group. Mail goodasyoublr@gmail.com

HELPLINES

Naz Dost Helpline for gay men.

Monday to Saturday 1-7 pm

The Naz Foundation also hosts weekly meetings and support groups for men. Call for details (011-2981-2287)

Sangini Helpline

Tuesday noon 3 pm, Friday 6-8 pm

Sangini provides confidential advice for women who are attracted to women. Call for details (011-6567-6450)

ICWO Lesbian helpline (Chennai)

Monday Friday 9.00 AM to 6.00 PM

A dedicated helpline for Lesbians by the ICWO (Indian community welfare organization) in association with Action Aid Call for details (044-6551-5742)

TARSHI Helpline

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-4 pm

Confidential and anonymous counseling and referrals on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues. Call for details (011-2437-2229)

Alternative Law Forum

Mon- Fri, 9:30 am- 6:30 pm

The forum provides legal services related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights. 122/4, Infantry Road, Bengaluru (2286-8757)

Lawyers' Collective

Mon-Fri, 9am 6pm

This collective works on issues related to discrimination on grounds of HIV and AIDS First floor, 4A- MAH Road, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru (4123-4130)

LESBIT

Sat 3:30- 6:30 pm, Sun 11:30 am 6:30 pm

LESBIT is an organization that offers counseling for lesbians and the transgender community Call for details (99452-31493)

How to use this space: Pink Pages proves free listings for non-profit LGBT groups and individuals. To get yourself listed, mail us at listings@pink-pages.co.in. All inputs may not be accomodated due to space constraints.

QUEER N' FUNNY



There used to be a man who owned a bar out in the middle of nowhere. Not too many people came to the bar, so he was trying to think of a good gimmick to get people to come. It so happened he was watching T.V. at the time and the parade for the circus was on. As the elephants went by he remembered reading somewhere that elephants don't laugh. He went down to the circus and inquired about buying an elephant. It just so happened that there was an elderly elephant bull that the circus was planning to retire. After agreeing on a price, the man bought the elephant. Back at the bar the man put a large jar on the bar with a sign reading: "Make the elephant laugh, \$5.00 a shot, win \$5,000."

Well, a lot of people thought they could make the elephant laugh, and

soon the jar was almost full. Then one night a man walked in and said to the bar owner, "I hear you will give any one who can make the elephant laugh \$5,000." "Yeah, he's out back"

After about five minutes tremendous, deep, thundering laughter could be heard coming from behind the bar. Every one in the bar raced back to see what was going on. When they got there the elephant was LAUGHING!!! The man could not believe his eyes. But, a bet was a bet after all and he paid the stranger who had made the elephant laugh.

A few weeks later the elephant was still laughing. The bar owner could not stand it any more so he put a sign on the bar reading: "Make the elephant cry, \$5.00 a shot, win \$5,000." Again, a lot of people tried and tried, but they could not get the elephant to stop laughing. Finally the

man who had gotten the elephant to laugh in the first place walked in. Upon seeing the sign, he inquired if anybody had had any luck in stopping the elephant from laughing. Seeing as no one had, he once more went back behind the bar to see the elephant.

In less than a minute a wail of grief cascaded over the bar. All the patrons ran out to see what was up. The elephant had huge tears running down its cheeks. Once again a bet was a bet and the bar owner paid the man. Before the man could leave, the bar owner asked how he had gotten the elephant to laugh and then to cry.

"Easy." said the man, "When I first went back there I told him my dick was bigger than his. And now I just proved it."

QUEER N' FUNNY

A girl goes into the doctor's office for a checkup. As she takes off her blouse, the doctor notices a red "H" on her chest. "How did you get that mark on your chest?" asks the doctor.

"Oh, my boyfriend went to Harvard and he's so proud of it he never takes off his Harvard sweatshirt, even when we make love," she replies.

A couple of days later, another girl comes in for a checkup. As she takes off her blouse, he notices a blue "Y" on her chest. "How did you get that mark on your chest?" asks the doctor. "Oh, my boyfriend went to Yale and he's so proud of it that he never takes off his Yale sweatshirt, even when we make love," she replies.

A couple of days later, another girl comes in for a checkup. As she takes off her blouse, he notices a green "M" on her chest. "Do you have a boyfriend at Michigan?" asks the doctor.

"No, but I have a girlfriend at Wisconsin, Why do you ask?"

An employee of USAir with the last name of Gay boarded a US Air flight with a free travel voucher. Soon after he sat down, someone else came and claimed he had the same seat assignment, so Mr. Gay moved down to an empty seat.

Soon after that the airplane began to fill up. The rule with the US Air employee vouchers is that if a paying customer needs your seat, you have to surrender it. So when the flight became completely full and still more needed to get on, a flight attendant went to the original seat of Mr. Gay and said the the man now sitting there, "Excuse me, are you Gay?"

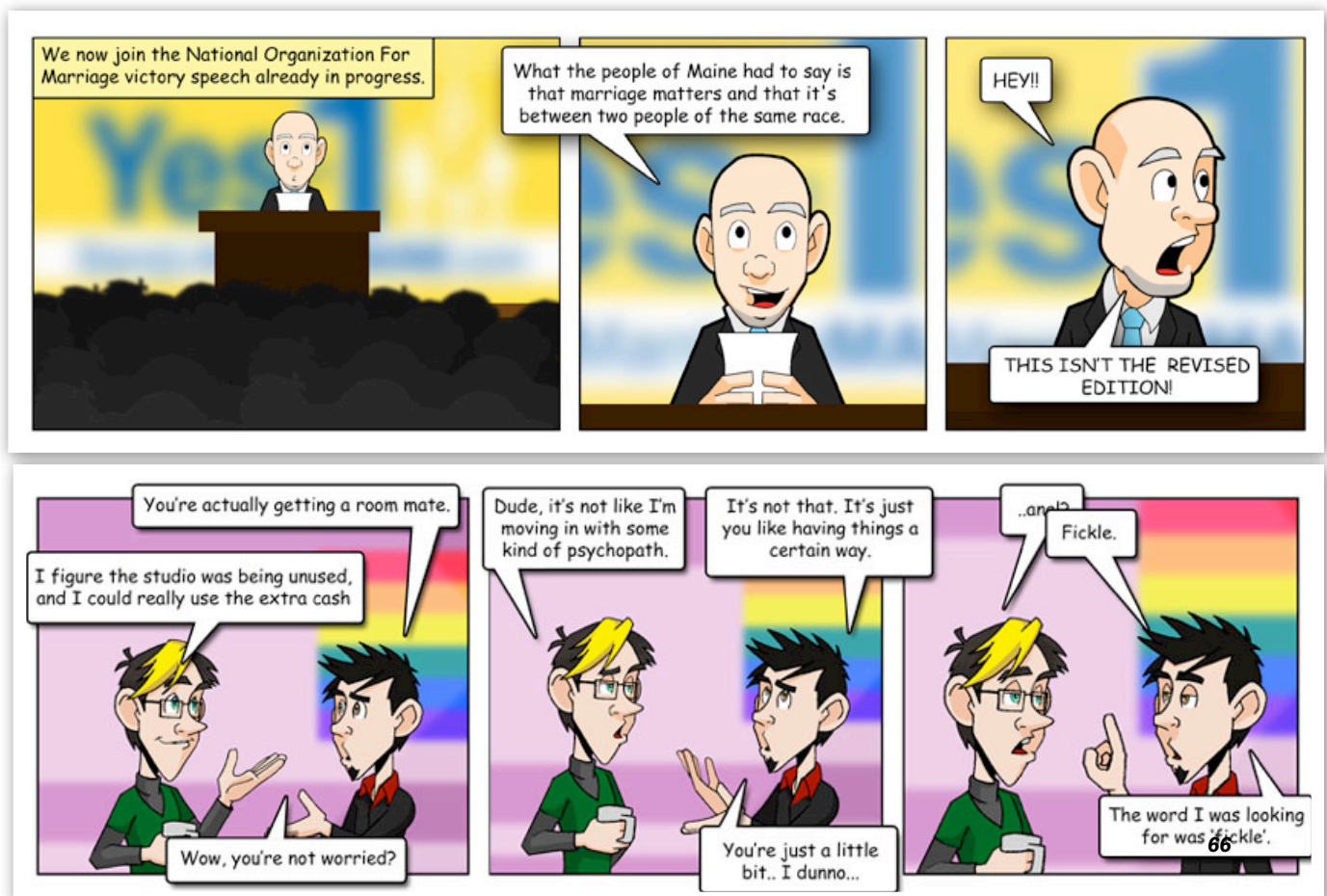
The man, somewhat stunned, said, "Well, yes, as a matter of fact I am!"

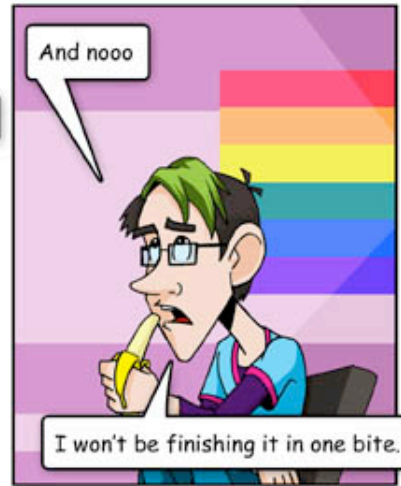
The flight attendant said, "I'm sorry, but you'll have to get off the plane."

At this point Mr. Gay, who had been watching all of this, jumped up and said, "Excuse me, you've made a mistake - I'm Gay!"

Finally, another man jumped up and said, "Well, hell, I'm gay too! They can't throw us all off!"

DOWN AND OUT





FROM THE BLOGOSPHERE

La Vie En Rose-alifeinpink.wordpress.com

LOVE YOU TILL DEATH

"Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live." – Norman Cousins

*The Sky was Crimson
And so is my memory
The crowd, the air; all were loud
Except my soul: the felon of this story*

*I witnessed something
Sinful and Unforgiven
That speaks of shame
And cries like wild raven.*

*A mob chased someone
In a fit of rage
My senses fluttered
Like wings in a bonded cage*

*A larceny or murder
What can befit thy imminent fate?
The anxiety ravaged me
But my soul remained obstinate.*

*At last I saw him,
A face familiar yet blurred
Where have I seen him before?
In life or dreams, I wondered.*

*Fear in his voice
Beg for mercy in his cries
My soul remained stubborn
Unmoved by his bleeding eyes.*

*As if being hunted
He fled like a timid prey
Until he stumbled to enter
The next scene of a tragic play.*

*They pounced on him
Tore his cloth and flesh
Roared in triumph as the life
Disbeveled beyond human phrase.*

*He lay bathed in red
And the dust below his body*

*The tears, the blood shivered me
Except my soul's silent parody.*

*Their voices soon died So did he
The last word, I heard he him cry
Was a name that belonged to me
Nothing more to see or hear
Only the question unanswered*

*Who was he and his crime?
That left a life bantered.*

*Smear'd in blood and red dust
Was his lifeless, yet closed palm
Some heaved sorrow some disgust
Pardon my soul, it promised to be calm.*

*One by one the crowd left
Leaving him with a bleeding heart
Like a spectator I stood alone
Beholding the blood stained art.*

*I unfolded his fingers to see
What's worth more than his last breath
It was a picture of a man I knew
A man who loved him till death*

*I held him close to my chest
And kissed his lips with mine
My hands now stain his blood
Will they ever fade with time?*

*My love for you, I let it die in me
I feared, you never loved this man
Today as you die in my arms, I know
I never stopped loving you, I never can.*

*Now everything was silent again,
The crowd and the air
Just then, I heard my soul chanting
It was a lover's forbidden prayer.*

– Lover's prayer

I could feel an incredible pain gradually emerging beneath the skin of my left arm. I rushed to the mirror to have a look. My left shoulder and arm were bruised badly; there was a long deep cut although the blood had dried up. WTF! How did this all happen? I panicked.

As I kept replaying the events of my last evening, trying to remember how I hurt myself, tiny fragments of my dream kept flashing in front of my eyes; the crowd and the boy, the tears and blood, death and silence and lastly... the indelible sweet taste of his lips on mine.